THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION

The Entrepreneur’s Strategic Guide: To Earn More Money, Make a Bigger Impact, and Enjoy Greater Freedom

VANESSA SHAW
The Million Dollar Question
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Vanessa Shaw
Here’s What’s Inside…

Forward..........................................................................................1
Introduction.......................................................................................3

Chapter One:
The Million Dollar Question.........................................................7

Chapter Two:
Energy Management......................................................................23

Chapter Three:
The Three Mindsets and
The Three Pillars ..........................................................................29

Chapter Four:
The Business Acceleration Model ............................................37

Chapter Five:
Transformation Begins with
Telling the Truth ..........................................................................57

Chapter Six:
How to 10 Times Your Business..................................................65

Chapter Seven:
Final Thoughts .............................................................................73

Here’s How to Earn More
Money, Make a Bigger Impact,
and Enjoy Greater Freedom .....................................................75
“What are you tolerating?”

It was 2014 and this question sunk into my heart. Only a few months prior, I had found myself with a failed business, unemployed, and cobbling together an uncertain month-to-month income through a hodgepodge of marketing consulting gigs.

She repeated the question, “What are you tolerating?”

I looked around at my table. The strangers around me at the Hermosa Inn in Scottsdale, Arizona, were writing furiously, yet I drew a blank. I had never been in this type of environment before, suddenly being challenged by a British woman, in heels and a designer dress, cutting to the core of my heart. I knew I had to write, and so I sat back and let it flow:

- Lack of profits
- An addiction
- Depression
- Intolerable clients

The list went on and on. What I didn’t know at the time was how transformative this question would be, opening the floodgates of self-analysis and improvement that sits at the core of who I am today.
Fast forward now five years later – and I can say without question that British woman changed my life forever. Today – stemming from that single weekend – I’ve created a life of my dreams, with the family and business I could have never imagined. This question allowed me to get clear on the hidden hindrances to the growth I wanted, blocked by stories, relationships, and beliefs I never knew existed.

If you haven’t put it together, this British woman is my good friend, Vanessa Shaw. I couldn’t be more grateful for the work Vanessa does. Not only have I experienced it myself, but I have seen countless lives changed through her approach.

Inside of this book, Vanessa has laid out a concept so simple, yet so radical, it can set you free. Perhaps this is your first time exploring the business that is You. Maybe this is another step in your lifelong commitment to personal improvement. Either way, get ready for serious change, hard work, led by a guide I know and trust.

“What are you tolerating?”

This question has changed my family and me. I cannot wait for it to do the same for you!

– Russ Perry, Founder & CEO of Design Pickle

@russperry
Introduction

*Every aspect of a business is shaped by its leader.*

This book is for business leaders who want a bigger and better future for themselves and their loved ones – and who want to enjoy fantastic success sooner rather than later. It’s written for those who understand that growing a business is an ongoing process of raising your personal standards, expanding your mindset, and applying new strategies and tools to build consistent and scalable growth.

Over the last 15 years, I’ve coached thousands of business owners – either privately or as clients in our *Business Growth Academy*. Something I’ve learned during those years is that those who are destined for success need to feel that they are constantly growing and challenged. In fact, I’m convinced that a desire for self-improvement and growth is what differentiates successful individuals from their peers. In personal and professional growth, successful people find a sense of accomplishment, validation, and purpose in their lives.

Yet, despite personal growth being so crucial to success, the majority of business people have little, if any, foundational knowledge in personal development. And very few have made a serious commitment to the development and practice of their own personal leadership.
From my experience, a majority of business owners, rather than actively seeking help, embrace a “go-it-alone” or “I can figure everything out myself” approach. For a lot of them, asking for help represents a sign of weakness or failure. They don’t realize that just the opposite is true. Nobody has all the right answers or the right perspective all the time – no matter how clever you are. The reality is that many of us have become masters of getting in our own way and we can be our own worst enemies.

For many years, I was an Executive Coach in Europe, working with high performing individuals who were feeling burned out by the hours they had to put in, the teams they had to manage and the ever-increasing list of stuff they needed to get done (and typically hated). Almost all of them had the same excuses. “I can’t find good people.” “I’m the only one who can do this.” “I can do it faster than explaining it to somebody.”

But the end result was that they were spending little of their time in what I call their “Zone of Genius” – focusing on the things that only they as the leader in their business should be doing. It’s no surprise that they often ended up burnt out, fed up, and dreaming of retirement so that they could live a simpler life, focusing on the things that they truly enjoyed.
I will argue in this book that the first step to getting on a healthy path to personal success is to understand what’s getting in your way and wearing you down daily in your life and business. That can be challenging for some of us to address as we’ve often been putting up with doing unpleasant stuff for so long, we’ve become numb to the negative impact it’s having on our potential.

To move forward, we need to break a never-ending cycle of tolerating things or behaviors that no longer serve you and act as obstacles to future growth.

In the following chapters, I’ll explore The Three Mindsets for transforming you as the leader of your business. I’ll also share The Three Pillars and how they are what most of our clients are seeking when they work with us. I’ll also explain how these are part of our Business Acceleration Model and its Nine Growth Accelerators and provide you with an overview how they can be applied practically to your business.

My goal is that by the time you’ve finished this book, you’ll no longer settle for second best and mediocrity. Instead, you’ll strive to raise your personal standards and become an inspirational leader that others will want to follow.

You’ll also have a deeper insight into what is your true nature and how by constantly moving toward that your energy will increase along with your creativity, your joy, and your desire to add
greater value to the world around you. You’ll no longer be waiting for a bigger and better future at some unknown and distant point in the future. You’ll start living the life that you always wanted to live right now.

So, let’s get started with The Million Dollar Question.

To your success,

Vanessa
Chapter One: The Million Dollar Question

The Million Dollar Question originated at an event I hosted a few years ago. I was on stage giving a talk and I asked the audience a simple question to think about. Afterwards, at the break, a woman came up to me and said, “Vanessa, I took the time to answer that question and did the math on a sheet of paper. I’ve been holding back on making a big decision in my business and I’ve realized it’s costing me a million dollars in lost revenue. It’s also resulting in a myriad of other problems because I’ve been putting off making a big decision. I want to change this now and need your help to turn things around.”

The woman in question was a very smart and highly experienced family physician, Dr. Susie Wilder, based here in Scottsdale, Arizona. She became one of our top clients and fast forward a couple of years, we have worked with her to turn her medical practice into the new kind of practice that she truly wanted to be leading.

Dr. Wilder is committed to transforming healthcare to make it much more patient-centric with a focus on health, wellness, and true vitality. This meant a new way of operating in her practice and being able to provide exceptional levels of care and service to her patients.
What was *The Million Dollar Question* that triggered a shift for Dr. Wilder? It’s simply this:

*What are you tolerating?*

It seems such a simple question but the reality is that many of us have things in our lives that we’ve been putting up with for a very long time.

I call these **tolerations**. Tolerations are like a tap that we have never fixed that’s been dripping and dripping for a very long time. Sometimes, we’ve even stopped paying attention to how annoying it is but it’s always there nagging us in the background. Tolerations are burdens that we carry around with us.

Let’s liken this to setting off on a big mountain expedition. Imagine you’re going to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, the tallest mountain in Africa. Needless to say, you’re going to have to get super fit and carry the right gear with you on this trip. Typically, you’ll be packing everything you need in a big backpack. An important question that you’ll need to answer beforehand is “How heavy should my backpack be?”

Obviously, you need to make some tough choices about what you’re going to take and what you’re going to leave behind. That backpack could end up weighing 50 pounds or more. And remember you’ll be carrying it for days on end to a very high altitude. Kilimanjaro is over 19,000 feet high and as you reach higher altitudes with less and less oxygen, you’re going to struggle
breathing and that backpack is going to get heavier and heavier. If it’s too heavy, it’s going to be significantly slowing you down and if you make the wrong choices as to what to bring, it can prevent you from reaching the summit.

Wouldn’t you prefer to be only carrying exactly what you need to reach the summit?

That’s what *The Million Dollar Question* is all about. As you take your business to the next level, what should you be taking with you and, perhaps as an important, what should you be leaving behind?

It’s an important question. The number one mistake I see business leaders making is being buried by activities that they have come to consider as “part of their job” but drain them mentally and physically and prevent them from doing what they should be doing as the leader of their business.

I think this happens because as entrepreneurs we typically love to start new projects. But what we neglect to do is to think about the things that *we need to stop doing* to get to the next level.

There are surely things you’re doing now in your business that no longer serve you as the leader. You likely did them when you started out because you had no choice. But now they’ve become a burden. Chances are these are things that aren’t in your natural skill set or the highest value activities that you ought to be performing
in your business. You probably should have delegated them to somebody else a long time ago!

I’m going to be super transparent with you. I discovered the power of examining and overcoming tolerations when I took an honest look at my own life. Here are a few examples of what I’ve had to face after many years in business:

- being the doer in my business instead of the CEO
- not paying attention to my own numbers and nearly going bankrupt
- not paying myself first
- working with draining clients
- accepting a bad attitude or sense of entitlement from team members (they see the money coming in and think they deserve more of it!)
- my own procrastination
- not marketing consistently (which I justified by busyness)
- an AV team member who we discovered was drinking on the job at one of our events (true story)
- clients who were verbally abusive to other clients or team members
• 15 extra pounds on my body
• wearing way too much beige (you'll notice a lot more color these days)
• a disorganized office
• lack of systems in the business
• no real project management system
• missing deadlines (which I also justified by busyness)
• not going after clients that I really wanted to work with
• not having enough time to play tennis and improve (I became captain of our team to remedy that one!)
• working on weekends and being constantly preoccupied with the business
• wanting greater success for my clients than they wanted for themselves (this one is hugely draining)
• getting a small wake-up call from my gynecologist and then not immediately following through (it’s all good now)
• not spending enough quality time with my husband and kids
• feeling constantly overwhelmed and frustrated
• taking way too long to write this book!
And honestly, there are more examples I could list but I think I’ve made my point!

The truth is we’re all tolerating stuff that holds us back. But I now measure progress by the fact that my list of tolerations is constantly changing. That means I’ve kept raising my standards and taking on new challenges that help me take my own business to the next level.

And I can attest that life is so much more enjoyable this way.

Is life perfect all the time? Of course not, but is it really good most of the time? I can honestly put my hand on my heart today and say yes. I’ve been married for almost 25 years and I’m still madly in love with my man. I’ve got 2 healthy and happy children with whom I love to spend time with which includes travelling around the world together. We live in a beautiful home and environment in Scottsdale, Arizona. And we’ve got three dogs and a cat that bring us lots of joy and unconditional love.

I’m also particularly proud of what we’ve achieved in business and the community that we’ve built around our Business Growth Academy. I’m excited for the future because I know there’s so much more that we can do. I’m now living my own personal version of freedom which I define as doing the work I love, with the people I love, how I want to, and when I want to.
For me, that’s a massive achievement. I came from pretty humble beginnings and I don’t have a fancy MBA degree. I went into business for myself after spending 10 years as a stay-at-home mom raising two wonderful children. For a very long time, I tolerated that as a story that held me back. It led to a lot of second guessing myself and believing that I would never really understand how to run a business. I created such a mess that I almost went bankrupt!

Looking at my life through a perspective of what I was tolerating changed everything for me. It now meant that I could do something about it and learn the lessons and skills that avoid repeating the same mistakes. What fueled me was a burning desire to be the best version of myself and to make a difference in the world through my business.

_The good news is if I can do this, so can you._

I’ve worked with thousands of executives and business owners over the years. As I said earlier, the biggest mistake I see business leaders make is being overwhelmed by activities they consider as “part of their job” but drain them mentally and physically. They’ll say, “Well, these are just the things I’ve got to do” or “I need to suck it up, I’m the business owner”, or “that’s the way it is, business is hard”. They take on all kinds of tolerations believing they’re going to get some kind of validation for them. Some consider it’s a
badge of honor to suffer, sacrifice and just soldier on in their business.

That’s counter-productive. The reality is that tolerations will wear you down and drain the necessary energy you’re going to need to grow your business. Whenever I ask business owners if they have great unimplemented initiatives because they’re too caught up in the weeds of their work, the answer is always a resounding “Yes!” Tolerations always get in the way of your potential.

**Energizing Yourself**

We’ve been trained to think about work in the context of the number of hours we put in every day. I think we should instead think about the amount of energy we have available to expend in a day. When we’re tolerating things, our energy bank becomes drained very quickly. When we’re striving to reach the next level and are engaged in activities that challenge us and help us grow as a business leader, we actually get a surge of creativity and energy.

Your goal is to minimize the former and increase the latter!

So, let’s examine *The Million Dollar Question* in the context of your **professional life**:

*What are you tolerating?*

To help you, here are a few examples of the answers I’ve received from our clients over the years which might resonate.
• I’m tolerating underperforming team members or vendors that aren’t doing what they should be doing

• I’m tolerating having low revenue months, or not knowing my financial numbers

• I’m tolerating working too many hours and not paying myself

• I’m tolerating winging it in my business and not having a solid growth plan with clear next action steps

• I’m tolerating not having the clarity of what the next level of my business looks like

• I’m tolerating not working with my ideal clients or tolerating clients who are overly demanding and don’t respect the value we provide

• I’m tolerating clients who are challenging our fees, making late payments, or even worse, not paying

Do any of these sound familiar?

*Take a sheet of paper and write down a complete list of things you’ve been tolerating in your professional life.*

*Tip: If you find this challenging, start by making a list of all the things you know you should be doing but currently aren’t.*
Now with that done, let’s ask *The Million Dollar Question* in the context of your **private life**:

*What are you tolerating?*

You are one person and how you show up in your personal life affects your business and vice-versa. You may think you are gifted at separating the two, but the reality is that there is no separation. How you show up as the leader in your business affects everything.

What are some of the things that you’ve been tolerating in your personal life? Here are a few examples of the answers I’ve heard from my own clients over the years.

- I’m tolerating working too many hours and on weekends
- I’m tolerating never taking a vacation
- I’m tolerating a toxic relationship in my family or with certain friends
- I’m tolerating my home being cluttered or neglected
- I’m tolerating that my personal finances are not in order
- I’m tolerating neglecting my health
- I’m tolerating living an unhealthy lifestyle
- I’m tolerating having packed on too many unwanted pounds
You can take this another level deeper and ask: **What are you tolerating about yourself?**

Here are some answers I’ve heard.

- I’m tolerating playing too small
- I’m tolerating getting in my own way
- I’m tolerating over-complicating things
- I’m tolerating feeling overwhelmed
- I’m tolerating not taking full responsibility for my actions
- I’m tolerating procrastination
- I’m tolerating perfectionism
- I’m tolerating my lack of effective decision-making
- I’m tolerating not putting my amazing creative ideas into action
- I’m tolerating not having big enough goals for myself and my business
- I’m tolerating living up to somebody else’s expectations of me

*Take a sheet of paper and write down a complete list of things you’ve been tolerating in your personal life.*

**Taking Stock**

So, you should now have a good list of your business and personal tolerations! Here’s what
these tolerations really represent: an old version of you. The future version of you can no longer be slowed down or stopped by them. You need to tackle them one-by-one and become the leader your vision and goals deserve.

You might have heard the expression:

“You won’t get what you want. You’ll get what you tolerate.”

It’s true. When you reduce your day-to-day tolerations, it opens the door to continuous personal and business growth.

The good news is you don’t have to work on your whole list of tolerations at once. I recommend working in sets of three so start with your top three. Pick one that you know is easy to solve so you can have a quick win. Then take two more have been around for a while and that you know have been hindering your growth. There may even be what I call an umbrella toleration that when addressed minimizes or eliminates another toleration.

**The Stories We Tell Ourselves**

The stories we tell ourselves are typically the reason we have kept an irrational toleration in place for a long time. You need to uncover the reason behind this story. The answer can be revealing and it’s often rooted in a fear of change or inertia – neither of which are a supporting of growth.
I once asked a local business owner attending one of my events the reason he continued to tolerate an under-performing employee. He replied that he was concerned that if he fired him, he would take some of his clients with him. At first glance, this concern appeared to be valid. However, he hadn’t realized that this team member was already the reason he was losing clients. His revenues were dropping and he wasn’t paying himself adequately. He was also extremely stressed out and ultimately, allowing himself to be held hostage by an under-performing employee.

I’d love to share that there was a happy ending to this story but the truth is that the situation never changed. His business is now in a downward spiral and it isn’t going to end well unless he tackles this toleration head on.

The lesson is that tolerations can have a huge cost. Try getting honest about the cost of your tolerations. And consider how long you’ve had them. It all adds up over the months and years!

*Look at your list of tolerations and write down what each of them are costing you:*

- mentally
- emotionally
- financially
- spiritually
- creatively
It’s usually easiest to start with looking at the financial impact of your tolerations. For example, pricing is an area where I see business owners living with a lot of tolerations — especially charging appropriately for their services and expertise.

As an example, we work with a lot of attorneys who bill by the hour. Typically, they haven’t raised their rates for years. Imagine you are charging $300 an hour but you know that you could easily charge $375. If you bill 1200 hours a year, this one change is worth an extra $90K to your top line revenue. Now add in all those other pricing tolerations such as discounting, writing off work that never was paid for, or giving away work for free. You’ll often find lots of dollars hiding in plain sight.

Once you start to understand the cost of your tolerations you can imagine the new opportunities that open up once you are rid of your old tolerations. Why not ask yourself in the context of each of your tolerations:

*What new opportunities are likely to open up for me when I’m no longer tolerating this?*

The process of letting go of something that you’ve done for a long time can be scary as it involves an element of risk taking. But you have to be willing to let go in order to grow.
I can tell you from my personal experience and the experience of my clients that whenever there is a bold move to let go of something that’s no longer serving you, better opportunities present themselves.

And of course, nothing changes if you don’t take action.

*Take a sheet of paper and write down three action steps that you can take today that relate to your tolerations.*

**Creating a Better Future**

Where could you be a year from now if you were no longer carrying tolerations that have weighted you down for so long?

You could have a business that supports the life you want to be living instead of still dreaming about it! You could have more confidence, bursts of creativity, and a lot more excitement in your life and business.

*Are you ready and willing to take the next step?*
Chapter Two: Energy Management

Most entrepreneurs and business owners are naturally curious and ever ready to try something new. They love jumping straight into new projects. They’re also used to working incredibly long hours.

When I ask our clients why they went into business for themselves, the answer I get most often is they wanted greater freedom: the freedom of being their own boss, the freedom of doing business on their terms, working when they want, with whom they want, and how they want. The realities of entrepreneurial life don’t always match up with that expectation of freedom.

The typical entrepreneur finds themselves working much harder than they ever have before and putting in incredibly long hours. They often wear this like a badge of honor which you can witness yourself at any networking event by asking: “How’s business?” The most common response is “Oh, my gosh. I’ve been so busy. It’s been absolutely crazy. I have absolutely no time”

The reality is that this busyness is how a lot of business owners validate their work and that’s a mistake. Wouldn’t it be better to be validated for working smarter and with greater alignment with the skillset, mindset, and activities that are
going to help you grow as a leader? You don’t get that by just working harder and putting in more hours than anybody else.

Have you ever noticed how very successful entrepreneurs, such as Richard Branson, also are taking lots of time off for fun? He’s clearly mastered the art of delegation and knows how to stay in his “Zone of Genius”. I remember an interview with him about how he evaluates business opportunities by first thinking about who is the best person who could run that business for him!

**Value Your Energy**

In life and business, your energy is always going to ebb and flow. I’m sure you’ve already recognized how you have different energy levels throughout your day, week and month. Our energy levels are personal to us and it’s good to pay attention to your unique cycle.

Let’s face it: the last thing you went into business for was to get to the end of the day or week feeling completely exhausted. If you’re energy depleted, you’re most likely preoccupied as well and you’ll end up spending your downtime still thinking about what exhausted you in the first place. Needless to say, your children or spouse won’t be seeing the best version of you either!

It takes a lot of energy to grow a business. Don’t let anybody tell you differently and if you’ve
been in business for a while, you know that there are constant challenges that you’ll need to face.

*Having low energy is not a great way to grow your business.*

As a business owner, your experience may be like many of our clients who are both typically founders and operators. When you start out in business, you have to wear lots of different hats. This can mean you’re performing activities that you may not have any skills in but you’re not yet in a position to hire people to do it for you. In these early phases, it takes a lot of energy to sustain you through being the Jack or Jill of all trades.

**My Secret Two Questions for Growth**

To be able to scale a business quickly and efficiently is the dream of every owner. Here are my secret two questions for growth.

What do I need to stop doing?

Who do I need to become to get to the next level?

The way to best dig into these is by recognizing what energizes you and what drains you. If you’re spending most of your working hours doing activities that you find draining, here’s what’s going to happen. First, you’re headed for burnout. Second, you’re not going to want to get your business to the next level because it no longer feels energizing and exciting for you.
Enthusiasm is Contagious

You also need to remember, depending on the size of your business, that your energy as the leader in the business is very contagious. You might be thinking that you’re good at hiding stress but believe me, everyone you engage with is going to sense it. Your team will sense it. Your clients and potential clients will sense it. So, will your vendors. And your family will feel it no matter how well you think you can cover it up.

And guess what? That cover-up exercise is going to drain even more energy. It makes far more sense to be letting go of those things that are draining and focus on those activities and skills that are going to energize you.

So how do we start?

The Energy Audit

A great place to start is examining the activities you are performing on a daily basis and equating them with the energy they are adding to or subtracting from your life. I call this an energy audit and you can do it for both your personal and professional life.

You can start by making a list of all the activities you do daily. If you do this over the period of at least two or three days, you’ll get a clear picture of how you’re using your time. Next, go through those activities and ask yourself the question: “Is this something that’s energizing me or is this something that’s draining my energy?”
Keep it Simple

When you look over your list, you’ll probably have a gut reaction that correlates with the list of tolerations you made earlier. It’s when we go through an energy audit exercise that we get clearer about which of our tolerations are making us the most miserable!

You may also notice, as you go through the audit, you might have a number of things that while may not make you miserable are still draining.

Equally so, you might be going through your list and saying, “Fantastic, I don’t have that many things that are draining my energy.” That’s great! Now you can build on that further by asking yourself what are the activities you would love to be doing instead that are truly in your “Zone of Genius” so you can be even more effective?

*Your time and energy needs to be dedicated to growing your business – you’re probably missing new clients and new opportunities because you’re putting your efforts into the wrong place.*

**Now onto Implementation**

Once you’ve finished your energy audit, you’ll want to address those activities that are significantly slowing you down and keeping you stuck. It’s time to get them resolved and remember that I like working in threes!

*Write down your top three things that you need to stop doing.*
Everything’s about quick problem-solving, making quick decisions and eliminating those energy drains so that you can take your business to the next level.

I always like to get some quick wins under my belt because it motivates me to make more changes. Often, you’ll end up saying “Wow, that was much easier to get rid of then I thought.”
Chapter Three: The Three Mindsets and The Three Pillars

In the last few chapters we discussed your tolerations and how they impact your energy.

We’re now going to dive into The Three Mindsets that we use with our clients. These are like the three legs of a stool that come together to form a stable and powerful way of looking at success for yourself and your business.

We’re then going to explore The Business Acceleration Model that we teach in our Business Growth Academy. The Business Acceleration Model is a unique framework we have developed to teach our clients all the essential elements of a successful business that is thriving.

Now onto The Three Mindsets.

**The First Mindset: Be Willing to Grow Yourself**

The first mindset is understanding that your business will only grow by the amount you’re willing to grow yourself.

We see this all the time. When a business is stuck or reaches a plateau, it’s typically because the business owner has stopped personally growing. They’ve usually become bogged down in the day-
to-day drudgery of running their business. They’ve taken their eye off their overall strategy. They’re no longer thinking outside the box and they’ve stopped investing in themselves to help them step up to the next level. They’re probably stuck in a comfort zone that no longer serves their business or those around them.

Here’s the tough truth. If you want to take your business to the next level, you’re going to have to accept that you need to evolve and develop as a business leader.

The Second Mindset: Hold Yourself to a Higher Ideal

The second mindset is you must hold yourself to a higher ideal. Here are two simple questions that help you explore this.

1. Who is it you desire to become in growing your business?

2. What does that next version of your business require of you as the leader?

When you have a bold vision for your business, but not a bold vision for yourself, the two are in misalignment and you'll experience a lot of internal conflict and even self-sabotage.

Holding yourself to a higher ideal and a higher standard means you’re no longer going to be tolerating certain things that, at lower levels, you did tolerate. You’re going to be more demanding of yourself. You’re going to be operating as somebody who merits being part of the small
percentage of people who enjoy greater success and fulfillment.

Before you start this process, you'll have no idea truly what is possible for you and your business. But once you fully embrace holding yourself to a higher ideal, you'll discover the power it has to shape you and your company.

**The Third Mindset: Let Go to Grow**

The third mindset is *recognizing that in order to obtain something of a higher nature, you must be willing to let go of something of a lower nature.*

This is a mindset that some people find difficult to grasp. This is where I get people saying, “Oh my gosh. This is a place where I’m feeling very uncomfortable.” They get concerned about what they could lose when they want to take things to the next level. But that’s the wrong way to think about it. You need to be asking instead: “What do I stand to gain?”

Let me explain this mindset with an example. I want you to imagine that you want to grow beautiful roses in your garden. Now, I’m from the southeast of England and happen to love English roses but I now live in a more desert-like climate in Scottsdale, Arizona. There aren’t many roses here, but I still love the idea of having beautiful roses in my garden. However, if I plant roses in this dry desert earth amongst all the other hostile desert weeds, it’s pretty much guaranteed that they’ll struggle and probably die.
However, if I recognize the weeds are of a lower nature, I’ll need to get rid of them. I need to put some fresh soil and plant fertilizer in there as well so those roses have the greatest chance of thriving.

Nature is one of the best places for us to witness getting rid of something of a lower nature. The same is true of you and your business. If you want to take you and your business to a new level of revenue and profit, you must be willing to let go of the older version of the business where the revenue and profit is lower. We simply can’t get to the next level by doing more of the same things you’ve always done in the past.

Over the years I’ve worked with many different businesses and clients, I’ve always found it to be true that when we have the courage to let go of those things that are no longer serving us and we are clear on what we want instead, things of a higher nature now have an opportunity to show up and come into our life and business.

A lot of our clients want to be able to work with higher quality and better paying clients. We must be willing to let go of those lower value clients that we’re no longer enjoying working with to be able to make room for the new ones we want to work with. I’m not suggesting that this is an easy process. It takes courage and a solid action plan to put it into place.
The Three Pillars

Once we have opened our minds to the power of The Three Mindsets, we can now move onto The Three Pillars.

There are typically three main things our clients want when they come to us. These are to generate more income, make a bigger impact, and enjoy greater freedom. We call these the Three Pillars of success. Our clients typically want a combination of all three so we typically focus at different times on all three pillars.

Income

The first pillar is Income.

Income is crucial to the livelihood and longevity of any business. It’s the oxygen of a business. If you don’t have enough of it, you’ll find yourself quickly out of business. Generally, the more people you serve through your business, the greater the potential you have to increase your income.

I want you to answer, honestly, for yourself right now. What is your level of satisfaction today around your income? On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being totally dissatisfied and 10 being super satisfied, where are you today?
Table 1: Income Satisfaction

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**Impact**

The second pillar is Impact.

When we speak about impact, consider how your business makes an impact and how that has a ripple effect in the world. One way to think about this is reflecting on the bigger “why” in what you do and the impact this has on the clients that you serve. What is the bigger change in the world that you want to see because of your work? Are you trying to build a community or a movement around your business? Is there a bigger cause behind your work that’s close to your heart?

You can also think about impact in terms of the positive impact your business has directly on you and your loved ones. For example, this might be in terms of the lifestyle you’ll be leading or the new opportunities you’ll be able to create for you and your family such as travel, vacations, or looking after loved ones.

Finally, you can think about impact in terms of the team that you can have supporting you in your business. You’ll be directly impacting their well-being and lifestyle.
On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being totally dissatisfied and 10 being super satisfied, where are you today in terms of impact? Don’t overthink it. Typically, the very first number that comes into your head is the right one.

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**Freedom**

Our third pillar is Freedom.

We can think of freedom across different dimensions. There’s freedom of time. Do you have control over most of your time? That’s super important, and again, most of the business owners we work with, that’s one of the major changes they want to make.

There’s also the freedom to be you. It’s what we call self-expression and creativity. How free do you feel to put more of your special gifts into your business and to express your creativity?

There’s also freedom around your professional relationships. These are the clients you get to work with, the team you get to hire to support you, the vendors – it’s everybody you interact with each day in your business.

Finally, there’s emotional freedom. Are you living in a place where you feel excited and passionate and joyful in your business? Or are you feeling a
heavy burden of your business right now? Maybe you're spending a lot of time experiencing frustration and overwhelm and maybe even heading to burnout.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being totally dissatisfied and 10 being super satisfied, where are you today in terms of freedom?

Table 3: Freedom Satisfaction

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**Summing Up**

Rating your satisfaction levels for the three pillars gives you a starting point as to the changes you'll probably most want to make. It can set the direction and key priorities for you to make changes.

It’s also interesting to look at the three pillars and ask yourself how do your tolerations relate to them?

Do you have a lot of tolerations around income and money, for example? Or around impact? Or is it around freedom? Where have you been allowing your tolerations to pile up?
Chapter Four:  
The Business Acceleration Model

In this next section of the book, we’re going to dive into practical and actionable practices for your business. For our clients enrolled in our Business Growth Academy, we have developed a framework that we’ve developed called The Business Acceleration Model (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: The Business Acceleration Model

*The Business Acceleration Model* demonstrates the interrelated components of a business. Just like a puzzle they need to be put together with a
clear picture in mind and assembled in the most effective manner. Most business owners ultimately come to us because they want to have a thriving business. For that reason, Thrive is at the center of the model representing the intersection of what our clients most desire: earn more Income, make a bigger Impact and enjoy greater Freedom. In the Business Acceleration Model, these are achieved through three key phases: Design, Attract and Deliver. Each phase has three unique Growth Accelerators that play a critical role in creating a thriving business.

Let’s explore in more detail The Business Acceleration Model.

The Design Phase

Getting the initial design of your business correct is critical to its future success. Think of it like you’re building a house. You can’t build a house by working it out as you build it. You need a detailed plan (a blueprint) and there’s a sequence of construction that needs to be followed, starting with building a solid foundation.

Unfortunately, a lot of enthusiastic entrepreneurs skip the crucial step of getting the design of their business worked out and then wonder why they can’t attract the type of clients they want.

In the Design Phase, there are our first three Growth Accelerators.
1. The Empowered Leader

Your business can only grow by the amount you are willing to grow yourself. What is your vision and what are your most important goals? Why are they important? Do you know how to develop a strategic growth plan to achieve them?

*The Empowered Leader* is all about getting clear on what you want to create, why you want to create it, and who it’s going to impact.

As the leader in your business, you'll have to develop the discipline of doing the things you said you would, when you said you would, even when you don’t feel like it! You’re going to have to build confidence in your abilities and to be a great role model for your clients and for your team members who support you.

You’ll also need to know where you’re likely to stop and slow yourself down so you can avoid cycles of self-sabotage and getting in your own way.

Being an *Empowered Leader* boils down to having the right mindset, setting bold goals for your business, and being growth-oriented. It's also about understanding the importance of investing in yourself to grow into the leader your business deserves.

I’ll give an example of an *Empowered Leader* by returning to one of our clients, Dr. Susie Wilder. She runs the successful concierge medical

Dr. Wilder is an example of somebody who’s already enjoyed years of tremendous success and recognition. She is recognized as one of the nation’s top family physicians and received numerous awards. She has served thousands of patients over the years that give her glowing testimonials and continuously refer others to her practice. But when she honestly answered *The Million Dollar Question* at one of our events, she realized that she was tolerating not having made an important decision about her business that would enable her to serve her patients at the real level she wanted to serve them.

What she really wanted was to serve her patients in the way that they would get the better health care that they deserved. That meant reorienting her practice to proactive and preventative health care instead dealing with health problems after they had occurred.

The decision that Dr. Wilder had been hesitating about for a long time was whether to focus fully on a concierge-style medical practice, which, on the one hand, meant working with fewer patients but, on the other hand, permitted much more individualized care. Patients would have direct personal access to individual doctors, state of the art medical testing, regular goal setting, and health coaching, so that they would have the best care possible. Together, we set out a plan
over the next couple of years to completely change the way she was running her practice.

Today, she is one of the top functional medicine specialists in Phoenix, running a highly successful concierge medical practice. In fact, *Concierge Medicine Today* lists her as one of 21 “Top Doctors in Concierge Medicine” nationally.

How did this successful change occur? It started with changing her mindset. By her own admission, she was worried about what other people and peers would think of this change. Which patients would she be letting down by making those choices? What would it mean for the staffing of her current practice? What might it mean financially? There were clearly lots of repercussions of making this change in her business, but once she was fully committed, she could also see all the positive things that would unfold after the transition. The patients were going to be getting exemplary care and she would be attracting top medical providers into her practice because they would want to be a part of an innovative concierge practice.

With those changes now in place, today she’s super excited about going to work every day. As a doctor, she’s extremely dedicated and this new way of running her practice has completely re-energized her life.

She’s now also has the mental space to think about even more opportunities for increasing her impact:
• how can she reach more people?
• what new programs can she create?
• how can she collaborate with other doctors and specialists?

She also enjoys a new level of freedom in her business. While she works closely with her concierge patients, she works with fewer patients, which in turn means she has more time to dedicate to her husband and family members, as well as her own health and well-being.

Getting clarity on this first growth accelerator by becoming the Empowered Leader in your business who gets crystal clear on their vision and takes action steps towards it is a total game changer.

2. Champagne Clients

Our next growth accelerator is Champagne Clients. These are your ideal clients, the people who are a joy to work with, value your skills, and respect your expertise and guidance.

If you were building your business with nothing but Champagne Clients how would that change things? Can you define them so clearly that you know how to speak in their language in a way that captures their attention? Do you understand their most pressing needs and their burning desires, as well as their deeper fears and frustrations?
Understanding your ideal clients is the foundation of building Know, Like, and Trust (KLT). Your ideal clients want to feel completely understood by you and when they feel understood, they are far more receptive to hearing how you can help them.

We teach our clients how to segment their clients into different categories, who we call champagne, wine and beer clients.

Champagne clients are the ones we enjoy working with the most. They’re the ones who respect us professionally. You’re proud to call them your clients and they’re willing to partner with you. They take responsibility for their commitment when working with you and value your guidance. They’re also willing to invest in themselves and you as a service provider. And best of all, they’ll refer other champagne clients to you.

On the other end of the spectrum, beer clients tend to be the ones who are very draining. They may cost you emotionally and financially and they’re typically more demanding. They often second-guess your expertise and rarely keep up their end of the deal. You instantly recognize your beer clients because when if you see an email from them or when you recognize a phone call from, you have a sense of dread!

This was part of the change that Dr. Wilder had to make in her practice. She had to get clear that while, yes, she could be helping more people
with a lower level of service in her practice, there was a certain type of patient that was much more satisfying because they were as committed as she was to better health care and outcomes.

Your business is no different. Identifying your champagne clients that you most want to work is critical to your success. Once you’ve identified the type of client you want to work to deliver your best results, it becomes much easier to grow your business.

3. **Powerful Promise**

Our third growth accelerator is *Powerful Promise*. Once you have defined who your champagne clients are, it will be much easier to develop a *Powerful Promise*.

Your prospects will be coming to you because they have a problem and ideally, you’ll have a distinct and unique way of solving it. Your *Powerful Promise* represents the results a client can expect to achieve by working with you.

For example, my *Powerful Promise* to our clients is delivering more income, making a bigger impact, and enjoying greater freedom. It’s a big bold promise but I know if a client works with us and commits to doing the work, they’ll achieve those results.

When we start working with a client, we define what type of impact they are looking to make, how much income they want to generate, and how much time they want to free up. Then we
design a plan for them that will help them achieve what they desire.

*How clear are you on your powerful promise and the outcomes you provide for your clients?*

Once this *Design Phase* is complete with its three growth accelerators, you’ll have a much clearer understanding of your business.

Don’t skip this foundational phase or you’ll be lacking in focus and prone to chasing the next shiny object!

**The Attract Phase**

After getting clear on your ideal clients and the results they can achieve when working with you, we can move onto the *Attract Phase*. The *Attract Phase* is focused on how to effectively market to them, convert them into clients, and profitably price your services.

4. **Masterful Marketing**

The fourth growth accelerator is *Masterful Marketing* which shouldn’t be confused with sales.

The goal of *Masterful Marketing* is staying top of mind with your champagne clients when they require your services. One way to do that is to consistently deliver value-based marketing. Done well, this kind of marketing can perform a lot of heavy lifting for you by building your authority and a desire for your products or services.
With the Internet and the numerous professional and social media platforms it offers, there are so many marketing options available it can lead to overwhelm and wasteful spending on channels that don’t deliver any results.

*Masterful Marketing* starts with understanding the most effect medium for you and your clients – whether it’s the written word in blogs, articles, reports, or books; audio such as podcasts and radio; online using webinars or videos, in-person seminars, workshops, or conferences, or a combination of any or all of the above.

Ultimately, your marketing needs to be an authentic expression of you and your brand. It should provide inherent value – even for those who’ll never become a client!

One of my own mentors shared with me that if your marketing is done masterfully, you don’t need to shout to get your message across. Rather, it is like whispering in the ear of the right person at exactly the right time.

Marketing alone isn’t enough to bring in new clients. You’ll also need an elegant system for conversion of prospects into clients. There’s a real art and science to that we call *Elegant Conversions*.

5. **Elegant Conversions**

*Elegant Conversions* is the process where a potential champagne client is moved through a smooth and effective system which results in
them signing up to do business with you. I call it elegant because the way we teach it is just the opposite of being pushy or utilizing high-pressure sales tactics.

In the system we’ve developed and teach, we put an emphasis on your uniqueness in the marketplace. It also recognizes that with so many demands on your time, it’s important to have more in-depth sales conversations only with the right prospects.

To facilitate this, we’ve developed a two-step elegant conversion process that, first of all, identifies if your prospect does have a problem that you can solve, and secondly, ascertains whether they are a good fit to work with you.

With some simple structured questioning, we can show how it’s possible to qualify prospects in fifteen minutes or less and, if they qualify, invite them to a more in-depth conversation about how you can help them which includes you making an offer.

Without an *Elegant Conversion* system in place, you risk losing tens, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, and wasting tons of time!

6. **Profit Maximizer**

The last accelerator in our *Attract Phase* is about developing the right pricing model using what we call the *Profit Maximizer*.

One of the most common problems we find with business owners is that they are undercharging
for their services and expertise. The irony is that undercharging can actually repel your ideal clients. It’s critical that you and your clients understand the unique value of the services that you offer and that you stop apologizing for your pricing and discounting your services. Part of this is positioning that you are offering a high-end quality service for a unique group of discerning clients.

If someone doesn’t hire you simply because you are more expensive than a competitor, you’ve probably not had the right conversion system in place and probably ended up being viewed as a commodity where price differentiation is all that matters.

When building your pricing model, it has to be calculated with all your expenses in mind – your time, your energy, your expertise – everything that goes into providing your services including supplies, utilities, online software platforms, etc.

Please don’t make the mistake that many business owners make and forget to take your own salary into consideration when setting your fees! You’ve got to run your business by the numbers. Too many entrepreneurs go out of business because they get this wrong and end up running out of money.

There’s a great saying that goes, “Revenue is vanity, profit is sanity, and cash is King (or Queen!)”. Are your services priced so that you
can pay yourself too? If not, it’s time for a serious financial model review.

This concludes our *Attract Phase* and after we work through it with you, you’ll have a solid direction for your business along with a marketing and conversion system that attracts your ideal clients who’ll invest in your services.

**The Deliver Phase**

Our final phase, the *Deliver Phase*, focuses on how you deliver your products or services in a way that sets you apart from competitors. We’ve all had experiences of businesses that market well but deliver poorly on the backend. The end result is a negative overall reputation.

When your goal is working with fewer high-quality clients, you’ll need to provide a level of service and attention to detail that makes you stand out from your peers. The results are that your clients will feel they are well looked after and highly served – which means they’ll be more likely to refer other ideal clients to you.

Let’s move onto our next three growth accelerators in the *Deliver Phase*.

**7. Premium Experience**

*Premium Experience* is our seventh growth accelerator and is focused on the experience you create for your clients. In your delivery, are you somebody who’s going above and beyond to wow and delight your clients? Are you responsive? Is everything smooth from
onboarding to off boarding, so that your clients remember and cherish the entire client experience when working with you?

Something that we often see neglected is paying attention to the emotional experience that clients have working with you. Too many business owners focus on just getting new clients through the door and neglect how they are treated afterwards. Creating an intentional emotional experience that surprises and delights makes them want to come back for more. Clients always remember how you make them feel first and foremost.

Part of developing a Premium Experience is reflecting on each of the different client touch points in your business. Where do you need to improve that experience? Here’s a tip: focus on the emotions. What can you do to make your clients feel more looked after when they might be feeling their most negative emotions?

It’s all about providing high-quality client care and service throughout the entire lifecycle experience of a client. Doing this will help you retain clients longer as well as build strong referrals.

You can start creating a Premium Experience by honestly rating your current level of service. On a scale of 1 – 10, how many stars would you give yourself right now? Creating the right experience involves showing empathy, acute listening skills, and maintaining a low ego. As the Ritz-Carlton
says, “Don’t treat customers how you want to be treated. Treat them how they want to be treated.”

We’ve worked with hundreds of businesses at this point, and most of them want to be providing a better client experience but feel they lack the time to properly implement a system or culture that makes this a reality. I find it’s interesting is no one is really teaching small businesses about the importance of developing a Premium Experience and many consider it to be something only for the high-end hospitality industry. You can gain a real competitive edge and build client loyalty by intentionally designing a premium client experience.

8. Rock Star Team

Our eighth growth accelerator is Rock Star Team. To deliver a client premium experience, you’ll need a Rock Star Team, as you can never wear all the hats in your business.

In the early days of launching your business, your team is likely to be unpaid friends and family who support you initially. If you want to enjoy greater freedom though, you’ll need to grow beyond being a business of just one person! If you don’t, you’ll be limited by your personal capabilities as well as the number of hours in a day.

Your need for a team and the way you’ll build it changes as you grow. You may find that
independent contractors or outsourcing can be your optimum solution. You may find you’re growing so fast that you need to rapidly hire employees. It can feel scary at first to let go of specific tasks and trust someone else to take over, but unless you want to keep working 60+ hours a week, you’ll need to surround yourself with a Rock Star Team who supports you to do what only you can do best.

Just like your clients, your team will be an important reflection of you and what you and your business stand for. It’s worth investing in the best you can afford and hiring people who are experts in their own right.

Honestly, most entrepreneurs don’t go into business thinking about the responsibility of managing other people. That’s why it’s important to build a team with high levels of accountability, excellence and personal responsibility. That way you can lead your team to deliver on your vision without having to micro-manage and chase them each step of the way.

9. **Smart Systems**

Our ninth and final growth accelerator is *Smart Systems*.

Developing *Smart Systems* for your business frees you up to focus on your “Zone of Genius” while saving you time and energy. It’s draining and totally inefficient to be continually reinventing the wheel for repetitive tasks or
having to explain again and again how to handle a standard client interaction.

If you are explaining (or forgetting) on a regular basis how to deal with late payments, how to onboard a client, how to communicate correctly the status of a project, etc., then you have an excellent opportunity to work on building out your Smart Systems.

Because so many entrepreneurs are both the founder and the person who delivers the service (at least in the early days), they typically have a lot of expertise and information locked up in their head. Unfortunately, your business is at real risk if something happens to you and nothing has been documented or systematized. Not to mention that your head is probably dealing with trivial steps and processes that could be better stored and organized elsewhere.

Smart Systems give you the freedom you crave because they make your business processes replicable, automatic, and ideally at a guaranteed quality level. Once you have them in place and document them, it’ll just be a lot of rinse and repeat.

Some of the key systems that you’ll need to have in place are systems for backups, money, scheduling appointments, marketing, sales, keeping metrics for tracking accountability and success, communication protocols, delivery, and customer service.
Yes, it sounds like a lot but it’s probably simpler than you realize and can free up tremendous amounts of time and energy when these are in place! And there’s an added benefit – you’ll sleep better and feel less vulnerable knowing you have all these standardized systems in place!

**Summing Up**

That’s our quick overview of the *Nine Growth Accelerators* in our *Business Acceleration Model*.

The key to implementing the *Nine Growth Accelerators* to your business is knowing where you’re starting from and understanding what success looks like for each of them.

Now, the good news is that you don’t have to deal with all of these at once, and you don't have to improve all of them to already see some great improvements in your business.

At this point, you might want to say: “Oh my gosh. I’ve got so many changes I need to make and I don’t know where to begin.” That’s why I emphasize that this is an ever-evolving process and we teach our clients to look at our *Business Acceleration Model* every 90 days. That way, they can review what they've been tolerating and keep removing tolerations so that they have more energy to grow their business.
To that end, we’ve created a Business Acceleration Scorecard that allows you to map 12 levels of progress for each of our Nine Growth Accelerators. You can download a free PDF copy of our Business Acceleration Scorecard here:

vanessashaw.com/downloadscorecard/
Chapter Five:
Transformation Begins with Telling the Truth

To take you and your business to the next level, you’re going to have to become a truth teller. If you downloaded and completed the Business Acceleration Scorecard discussed at the end of the last chapter and honestly rated yourself, you might be surprised at your results and how much work you still need to do.

It’s good to be a truth teller. It’s no good kidding yourself that things are okay if they’re not or pretending things will miraculously change if you don’t change. That’s a surefire way to keep yourself stuck and, frankly, headed in the wrong direction.

You’re going to need to be open to change. I find change exciting, but it wasn’t always that way. I used to find it quite daunting. What happens when we try to change things that feel familiar and comfortable? Our brain wants to revert back to what we know and we tend to focus on what we’re going to lose rather everything there is to gain.

Embracing Change is Necessary

If you don’t embrace change and grow as a business leader, you’ll see that directly affecting
your business. Your business will slow down. It will stagnate. You’ll not be getting the results in income, impact, and freedom that you went into business for in the first place.

Inertia is often your biggest enemy. We get used to doing things a certain way. You might believe that’s the way it’s always been done so we have to do it that way. Those are the patterns we need to be willing to look at and honestly ask: “Is this really working and optimal?” If it’s not working, you need to be willing to change.

I see a lot of business owners making mistakes because of their impatience. They want to see the results before they’re truly committed to making a change. It’s almost as if they say to themselves: “Well, show me the evidence this will work, and then I’ll make the change.”

It doesn’t work like that.

To create great results, you must start to change yourself first, and the results will follow.

At times, it most definitely requires taking a leap of faith and digging deep inside your gut to pull out the courage to trust that it’s all going to work out in the end.

I find change so exciting. We’ve gone through this process so many times in our business and with our clients, that we now know what is possible. Don't wait for results before making a change. Set the goals and take the next steps.
Let me give an example. Let’s say you want to make a big leap in your business and you’ve put together a vision of where you want to be 12 months from now. I’ll typically ask my clients: “What would that feel like? Once you’ve achieved that vision, how will you feel?”

At that point, because you’ve created the vision, they’re typically going to feel pretty excited about it and respond with, “Oh, I’m going to feel unstoppable, or I’m going to feel empowered, or I’m going to feel in charge and that I’m truly leading my business.”

But it’s easy to forget that your business is a day-to-day experience and, if you haven’t dealt with your tolerations, you’ll be sucked straight back into activities that don’t move you forward. The reason is that those daily activities aren’t aligned with what you need to be doing for the new outcome you want to achieve.

That’s why change can feel really difficult. You may find yourself taking some small steps, but it’s not enough. It’s not consistent and it’s not big enough to bring about true everlasting change.

**Start with the End in Mind**

This is where you need to listen to the wisdom of your creativity and act on it. I love to call this reverse engineering or starting with the end in mind.

We start by figuring out where you want to be. What’s the end game? The end goal might be
something you want to achieve 12 months from now. Energetically, what would that feel like to achieve that vision? Now, we reverse engineer that into everything you’re going to do to get there and then look at all the individual steps you need to do. What does it look like to feel empowered in the next month? What does it look like to feel empowered this week? What does it look like to feel empowered and to take empowered steps today? It’s important that your everyday actions you take are in complete alignment with the longer-term vision you want for yourself.

**Truth Matters**

You also need to be very truthful. Truth matters. You have to be truthful about what you want.

*Where do you want to be 12 months from now?*

*Where do you want to be 3 years from now?*

*Where do you want to be 10 years from now, in your life, in your business?*

These are your dreams and your goals.

It’s important that you own them without judging them or yourself. Don’t judge yourself for wanting more than you currently have now. Don’t allow that voice to creep in that says, “Who am I to think that that could be possible?” The reason you have those desires within you is because they’re yours. They’ve been given to you so that you can fulfill on them. Fulfilling them is
the piece that’s going to enable you to grow as a person and help you realize that you’re capable of much more than you ever thought possible.

Being truthful about what you want is a great starting place. But being truthful in your assessment of where you are today is equally important. Honestly take a look at the good, the bad, and the ugly.

If you could paint me the picture of today, what does it look like? There are going to be some good, bad, and downright ugly things in there.

We all have ugly things we don’t want somebody else to see, that we don’t want anybody else to know about. Whether that’s inside ourselves, in something that we’ve been doing as the leader, we must be honest if we want to bring about real change.

Remember that nobody is perfect. Nobody has all the answers. We teach business growth to many clients in our Business Growth Academy and we certainly don’t have all the answers! This is where you must be willing to ask for help, to get guidance from the outside, to learn from multiple sources and to hold yourself accountable to the goals and action steps that you’ve said are important to you.

We All Started Somewhere

I also want to share, as we start to bring this chapter to an end, that we see a lot of business owners getting in their own way by becoming
too obsessed with their current circumstances – particularly if where they are now feels far from where they want to be.

You may have a big, bold vision but then you look at the current realities and as you’re painting that vision, it can feel like there’s a massive gap between where you are now and where you want to be.

It’s normal to feel overwhelmed by that gap and that it’s just not possible to achieve your dreams. You may look at your past and how everything you’ve done up until now has created this situation and how you might have tried and failed on your goals previously.

While these experiences can give you indicators and teach you some valuable lessons, you have to believe that they don’t define your future.

Every day, you have opportunities available to you to make new choices, to put yourself on a new course of action, and to start making decisions that create a very distinct future for you, a future you might not even believe could be possible.

*Truth-telling is the key to taking your business to the next level.*

Let me give an example of some clients that we helped turn around their business.

When Kelsa and Michael Dickey came to me several years ago wanting to grow their financial coaching business, we started with a big truth-
telling session. They were already very successful in what they were doing. Their business had grown very rapidly. The big part of truth-telling that Kelsa had to address was around her calendar. She said, “Vanessa, you have no idea the hours I’m working. Look at my calendar. It’s so jammed. I’m back-to-back with clients the whole time. I don’t have a moment to breathe. I can’t see how to grow my business from this level, and our income now is not where I want it to be.”

Kelsa also wanted Michael to come to work full-time into the business and I also discovered they wanted to grow their family. They wanted to adopt a child and they realized that this wasn’t going to be possible with the way their business was running right now.

The problem with their business model was that there was no freedom for anything else but work. Kelsa was close to tears saying, “I don’t know how much longer I can keep going on like this, even if I love the work I’m doing.” After discussing the situation, we were able to quickly adjust their business model by changing two growth accelerators: recognizing who were their Champagne Clients and the Powerful Promise they would be making. We also changed their pricing strategies and delivery mechanism. Back then, Kelsa was doing a lot of one-to-one work but we were able to grow a new highly leveraged group program for her. She had never attempted to grow her group program because she believed
people wouldn’t want to talk about their finances in a group setting.

That proved to be a misconception.

Within the next 12 months, they doubled the size of their business and they put themselves on a completely different trajectory. She was incredibly happy and Michael left his corporate job and transitioned into their business. And at the end of 12 months, they were able to begin their adoption process, which was an extremely time-consuming activity.

As we were writing this book, the adoption became final, and they were able to welcome a wonderful little boy named Alex into their family.

It truly is a wonderful story, a true story that began with truth-telling about what they wanted, where they were then, and a real willingness to make the changes to get different results.
Chapter Six:
How to 10 Times Your Business

I often ask a question of our clients with the stipulation that they must be very honest when they reply:

*What would happen if we 10 times your business tomorrow? How would that feel?*

Somewhat surprisingly, it’s rare that I get a positive response. If they’re honest, they’ll typically say, “Oh my gosh, I have no idea how I would do everything. There are not enough hours in the day.”

More often than not, they’ll say they’d be overwhelmed or their business would break down because there aren’t any systems in place.

It’s rare that somebody answers “That would be amazing because I’m so ready for that and everything’s in place. We’re set up to scale big time.”

A large part of that panic that most people feel is their mindset. When we start to think about multiplying our business by 10, it often doesn’t feel exciting because there are still so many things that we’re tolerating.
It all comes back to *The Million Dollar Question:*

*What are you currently tolerating?*

I want you to imagine going through a process of removing tolerations from your life and business every 90 days. That’s the process we take our clients through. How would that be different? How would that free up the time and energy for you to be more creative, to develop yourself as a leader, and to grow your business strategically and intentionally?

Imagine, for a moment, if you’re going through this process every 90 days. So, there are four quarters in any given year and two and a half years from now, you’ll have gone through this process ten times and probably eliminated almost everything that you currently find energy draining. And you’ll have created lots of space for those new ideas and innovations that you want to bring to your business.

Frankly, our experience has been that going through this process just four times over the next year can result in your business looking massively different from what it is today.

**It’s About Thinking Differently**

It’s all about thinking outside the box and we always start with thinking from the perspective of our first growth accelerator, the *Empowered Leader.*
We start with who you are being and digging deep into your most heartfelt goals, the ones that are important to you, and not the ones you might be thinking you should be achieving. After getting clear on those and putting systems and processes in place, you’ll be able to effectively implement and execute against those goals.

Having somebody to guide you along the way is critical. If you want to make big leaps in your business, the reality is you’re not going to do it alone. Nobody ever achieves great things alone. You want to have somebody who knows the way, who can guide you to understand the personal work that needs to be done to take your business to the next level, the strategies to employ and which tactical steps to take.

You don’t want to be taking advice and guidance from who I call armchair theorists – namely, people who sit on the sidelines offering uninformed advice but have never been in the arena of business.

Here’s the truth bomb. Most of them have no idea what they’re talking about. It’s so easy for people to give advice, and it’s often advice that they would never follow themselves. These are not the people you want to be listening to.

When you work with a business coach, you’ll achieve far more than you ever thought possible for yourself. Somebody who can help you expand your thinking, expand your mindset, expand who
you are being – and save you lots of time and money.

Inertia is one of our greatest roadblocks and one of the biggest benefits of coaching is learning how to get out of your own way. I’m a coach and I’ve always found it useful to have one or more coaches in my life. They constantly challenge me to step up to a new level in my personal development. And honestly, I like having different people challenge me in different ways and hold me to a higher standard so I can achieve more in a shorter timeframe.

The same can be true for you, too.

Here’s another success story I’d love to share with you about a client we’ve been working with for about three years.

Kelley Goodwin Rider is an amazing family law attorney based in Colorado. Three years ago, we met with her as she wanted to grow her law practice when it was just her, a paralegal and an assistant. That said, she was already generating over six figures in her new law firm but working extremely hard. There were so many pieces of her business model she didn’t understand at the time. She said, “Hey, I’m great at the practice of law. I know everything that I need to know. But the whole business of growing a business feels like I’m learning a new language.”

An area that Kelley was struggling with was, first and foremost, her mindset. She was finding
herself getting quickly into overwhelm and finding it challenging to even think about bigger goals for her business. This led to doubt in those early days of her ability to run a successful law practice.

One issue was that, at that time, she was not really looking at the numbers in her business. She found it extremely challenging to look at the numbers and to understand them.

She also found it challenging to ask for money in her practice. When we dived into her financials, we discovered tens of thousands of dollars in accounts payable that needed to be collected. These were conversations that she was basically avoiding having in her business.

There were also a number of opportunities for growth inside the business model she had developed but she hadn’t been implementing them because of a lack of time.

We worked closely with Kelley to set goals with actionable steps and now, just three years later, she’ll be taking her law firm over a million dollars in revenue. Most importantly, though, she has evolved into the true CEO of her business and an inspiring leader. She has systems and processes that she effectively uses daily. She’s now fabulous at sales and has strategies in place for money conversations that she avoided in the past. She’s also built a rock star team and had to say goodbye to a couple of people because they weren’t in total alignment with her vision or
performing at the level she needed to take her business to the next level. She now provides a premium level service to her clients and is a true advocate for children in her growing family law practice. Her success has been widely recognized and she was recently voted top woman attorney of the year in Colorado!

Besides running a profitable family-focused business that’s changing lives, it was important for Kelley to have a great lifestyle. Now, she’s able to enjoy vacations with her husband in wonderful locations and having lots of fun activities outside her business. All of that has been achieved by working through her business model, getting the help and guidance of experts outside the practice of law, and applying new tools that have allowed her to get fantastic results.

Finally, I want to mention the amazing personal transformation that she’s gone through. How Kelley shows up today is almost unrecognizable from the Kelley we first started working with several years ago. She asks completely different questions. She’s confident. She’s empowered. She’s inspiring to be around. She’s gone through amazing growth, and I know that she is as proud of the person she has become as we are. This said, she knows that she’s on a journey of continuous personal growth and has so much more to learn as she continues to build out her amazing practice.
You Can Never Ask for Help Too Early

Another example of an amazing client we’ve worked with is Nancy Hetrick. Nancy came to us in the very early stages of growing her business. Like Kelley, she was enjoying early days of success but knew she was capable of so much more. She was in a new specialized market of Certified Divorce Financial Analysts (CDFA), focused on the financial decisions that must be made as a result of divorce.

When she first came to us, Nancy said, “I want to grow my business quicker. I want to make some smart moves. It’s important for me that I have some great outside guidance, and I want to be very intentional in the way I grow my business.”

After working with us for the last two years, she pretty much tripled the size of her business. She is now dominating her market and it’s pretty difficult to even get an appointment with her.

The fact that she’s so sought after would have previously caused her a lot of panic. Yet, for those people who want to work with her, they’re willing to pay premium fees and even wait for 6 months to work with her personally.

She’s also built out her own rock star team of staff who replicated her processes to serve clients at the highest level. And she wants to free up even more time so that she can be out speaking, growing the business, serving as its leader and not doing all of the day-to-day work
inside the business. She’s also now able to enjoy more free time to take vacations and nurture her energy as the CEO of her business.

One of the things that Nancy mentioned when we first started working with her is that while she had a real passion for her career, her husband didn’t care much for his corporate job. He wanted to be able to leave his job and pursue his passion, which is restoring old motorcycles.

When Nancy and I recently touched base, she said she’s been able to make so much money in her business and invest in their future; this has opened up completely new options for her husband. Her husband put in his resignation from the corporate job he no longer enjoyed but when he resigned, the organization came back to him and said, “Listen, we want you to name your terms. We value who you are, and if it’s more time freedom you want, we’re willing to work with you on your schedule.”

The company was even willing to create a new role for him, which enabled him to be in his “Zone of Genius” and no longer tolerating what he previously found draining.

He now has time to pursue his passion for restoring old motorcycles. The lesson here is that getting out of your own way to grow your business can have huge ripple effects on those that you hold precious around you!
Chapter Seven: Final Thoughts

Life and business can be hard at times. But I’ve learned through coaching thousands of people that we know how to make things so much easier.

In our Business Growth Academy, we teach you how to change the way to approach your business and how to deal with the inevitable obstacles that appear.

Often solutions can seem easy when they’re on paper, but when it comes to implementing them, daily life has a habit of derailing our best intentions.

Our unique process looks at you and your business both as how it functions right now and where you want it to be. We don’t overpromise or promote a bogus get-rich-quick approach. Our focus is on building a lasting and strong foundation upon which you can construct a successful, scalable, and thriving business.

When we onboard you in one of our Business Growth Academy main programs, we begin by building out a personal 90-day business growth plan based on your unique strengths, desires, and a set of goals to get you quickly ramped up for rapid results. We back this with ongoing coaching and accountability in a community of
like-minded professionals to maximize the effectiveness of the plan we’ve developed together. Our passion is helping you accomplish your dreams and goals with practical and actionable steps.

If you’re ready to take your company and your life to the next level of success and fulfillment – and really be honest about what’s working and not working, we’d love to hear from you. You can contact me directly at Vanessa@VanessaShaw.com or visit us at VanessaShaw.com
Here’s How to Earn More Money, Make a Bigger Impact, and Enjoy Greater Freedom

“All transformation begins by telling the truth”
– Vanessa Shaw

This book is written for business leaders who want a bigger and better future for themselves and their loved ones – and who want to enjoy fantastic success sooner rather than later. It’s written for those who understand that growing a business is an ongoing process of raising your personal standards, expanding your mindset, and applying new strategies and tools that build consistent and scalable growth.

At The Business Growth Academy, our business is growing your business. Here’s how we can help:

**Step 1: Use our Scorecard of Nine Growth Accelerators**

Many business owners are confused about how best to accelerate their business growth and where they need to focus. To understand your starting point across our Nine Growth Accelerators in our Business Acceleration Model, download our scorecard and rate yourself.

[vanessashaw.com/downloadscorecard/](http://vanessashaw.com/downloadscorecard/)
Step 2: Watch our Kelsa and Michael Case Study

Learn how we helped Kelsa and Michael Dickey double their business. To watch it, go to:

vanessashaw.com/kelsaandmichael/

Step 3: Book a call with us to see how we can help you grow your business.

Just go to:

vanessashaw.com/playbigger/

In business, you typically have one of two growth problems. You’re either not growing quickly enough – which is frustrating – or you’re growing too quickly which can be overwhelming.

Either way we can help you!
Here’s How to Earn More Money, Make a Bigger Impact, and Enjoy Greater Freedom

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Inside, we’ll be exploring The Million Dollar Question and my goal is that by the time you’ve finished this book, you’ll be in a position of no longer settling for second best and mediocrity. You’ll no longer be waiting for a bigger and better future at some unknown and distant point in the future. You’ll start living the life that you always wanted to live right now.

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