



UP-OLGY

**Proven growth hacking methods &
shortcuts to grow your business fast with
less work**

**By
Nick Psaila**

UPology by Nick Psaila

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Dedications and Thank You

This work is dedicated to my nephew, James Paul Mercieca: You are in my mind always. I will see you on the other side.

To my wife, Rose: You are the 'reason' for me — I will love you until the last breath.

To my children, Phillip and Tiana: In a single lifetime, I could only dream of miracles like you.

To my sister, Josephine Mercieca: You have no idea how much your influence in my life has shaped me. I am humbled in the presence of such a being.

To Jem Bates: Thank you for believing in me, for your guidance and wizardry.

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About the Author

Nick Psalia is the Founder of Nick Psaila International. He is a Holistic Business Coach, Keynote Speaker and Thought Leader who lives and breathes success.

Nick is known the world over for transforming businesses and lives through his online programs, workshops and coaching programs.

As a dynamic, passionate and success mentor, Nick is obsessed with helping people take themselves to the next Level UP. He has been featured in numerous publications, TV and radio engagements as an expert in the field of Human Potential. As a trusted advisor, he also sits on the board of several multi-million dollar and award-winning corporations.

Introduction

‘You need to write a book about this, Nick’. My mentor urged me, planted the seed that would later germinate into what you now have in front of you. We had been talking about all I had learned in business and in my personal life — the ups, the downs and everything in between, and most importantly, what I call life’s beatings, but more on that in a moment.

After many years in business, most recently in the coaching field, and many testing life challenges, I knew I had plenty to share, but I had no idea on how or where to start. I remember looking at a blank wall for hours trying to figure it out. I’d never even written a blog. How could I write an entire book?

‘Just start,’ a voice inside my head kept telling me. ‘Just make a start, and the rest will come.’ Yes, I had thoughts that incapacitated me — you know the ones: ‘Yeah right, who will desire to read that?’ What I really need, I thought, is to take action. Perhaps getting out among people will give me inspiration. Therefore, I headed out to the local café, ordered a latte, opened a writing pad and began to scribble away. What is it that I know about, and how could this knowledge be organised and applied in a way that would be practically useful to others in the business world as well as in their personal lives?

Thirty minutes or so passed and it hits me like a tsunami, a download of information that I’ve never experienced before, and that’s still not slowed down today. I quickly drew four interlocking circles and wrote down the foundational pillars of the UPology system — *mindset, strategy, mastery* and *evolution*. The next idea has been a common thread throughout my life: it’s about *renewal*, looking for ways to make things better, to raise my game to the next level.

I’d love to tell you that this stroke of genius revealed a clear path towards what I should write next, but that couldn’t be further from the

truth. I did feel it was progress, though. As I'll return to later, everything we do, every challenge we set for ourselves, takes time to mature; to run its evolutionary course. My initial vision of UPology was no different. The one thing I made sure of was consistency. Every spare second I had, I wrote. Now, running a business and raising a family didn't leave me with loads of leisure time, but as you will come to see, once I focus on something I don't stop until it's done. The book was written in less than four months, during which more than 80,000 words flowed through me, including most of what you'll read here.

Life never comes in neat packages though, right? I was then running and building my business as well as studying part time, which meant that certain priorities took a back seat. So here, I am now, 18 months later, on a flight to Bali and an Awesomeness Fest, and I'm adding the final touches to this book. In these past months, I have grown; my life has changed, and certain people who are close to me have moved on or passed over to the other side. And along the way, I've experienced more of life's beatings.

Henry Hill, in the movie *Goodfellas*, said famously; 'The way I see it, sooner or later everybody takes a beating.' It's what you do about it that counts. You need to take it on the chin, pull yourself together and get back UP. For some, to get back up is easy and they are soon off again, while for others, well, they may never recover from a beating.

At the end of the day, the choice is yours. You can choose to live with your beatings, hold onto them, even let them define who you are until eventually they *become* your character. Alternatively, you can do something about them. This book is about helping you to heal the invisible wounds inflicted by life's beatings by introducing you to a system or method that will help you take your life and business up to the next level. I'm here to show you that if you get back UP one more time, change your attitude towards them and have a plan, you'll be okay. I'm not saying it's going to be all rainbows and butterflies, but with a changed attitude, you will be far better prepared the next time you take a beating.

Life will consistently challenge you, testing your limits in ways you weren't prepared for, whether business or personal. Why? Life is not a fairy tale! And if you think it can't happen to you again — well, you may want to reconsider. Beatings take many forms — physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual— and they don't seem to care whether you're young, rich and famous or old and broke. History is littered with stories of people who had it all and then lost it all and either they got back UP again or they simply let their circumstances defeat them.

If you're one of the defeated, you may walk around for the rest of your life with scars so ingrained that they've become a part of your character. You put yourself through the same mental torture over and over again. It takes only the slightest trigger to relive it. Most of the time we don't even realise it. We think that this is it, this is life, this is the hand we've been dealt. The beatings become part of us. I'm here to tell you that couldn't be further from the truth. But, in order to live the life you really want, you need to make some choices, to put in the work — and above all, to recognise that *you* are in control of you!

Five years ago, I would not have imagined in my wildest dreams that I'd soon be writing a book. Then I was just waking up from my living slumber, with so many amazing things yet to come. It took a leap of faith to change my life completely, but I've never looked back, and I have met so many beautiful souls who have taught me through sharing their reasons for being. It's not been roses. I've faced tough situations in my business and personal life, but most of the time, it's been UP!

My hope is that this book will help to guide you in your life and work. It's not about providing all the answers but about provoking thought. I want to help you to understand that you have choices, that you too can change, and to encourage you to take action. My opinions are just that having your own opinions gives you power, which leads you towards certainty and, importantly, enhances your attitude. You are the creator of your world. Every action you take or fail to take contributes to the sum total of whom and what you are right now.

From a business perspective, all the components I'll speak about in these pages I have, myself, lived through and tested again and again. In discussing them I have tried to be as open and authentic as possible and I have written about my experience frankly, warts and all. Nothing in this book is written simply because it was cool or because someone else suggested it was so. I cannot control your outcomes. I can simply share what has (and hasn't) worked for me in my life, and indicate the stage, of my own evolution, I have reached on my journey towards becoming a better contributor and helping as many people as I can; always remembering to put love first, above everything else.

I believe the ideas and tools offered in these pages will help you to grasp why you are whom you are, and to recognise the obstacles that hold you back from becoming all you can be. As anyone in business knows, for a business to be successful, many moving parts need to work in synchronicity. In this book, I'll suggest ways in which you can get all the wheels working together in harmony in your own life.

My aim is to arm you with the materials you need to deal with life's beatings, to help you create a life of happiness, love and success. My dream is to create a movement of people who will spread the UPology message. After reading this book, if you wish to know more about how to be certified as a coach in the UPology system, simply email coach@UPologybook.com or check out the site www.UPologybook.com.

Chapter 1: The UPology way: tap into the spirit

“All the evolution we know of proceeds from the vague to the definite.”

- Charles Sanders Peirce

All my life, I've had this feeling of needing to know more about everything around me, what makes things tick and what I'm here for. I always wanted to play music (drums, of course — every boy's dream). From when I was eight years old, I used to sit for hours at the feet of the drummer, at the club my parents used to go to in Malta, watching him play, and in the break just sitting on the stool and imagining it was me on stage felt like winning the lottery.

I was obsessed. I practised night after night, drumsticks in the car, at work — every breath was for music. The guys I hung out with, what I watched, the language, the look — they were all part of it. You get what I mean. Many a time I would wake up in the room behind our garage where I'd built a 'soundproof' studio (the neighbours didn't think it was) and it would be 4 or 5 in the morning. I would have blisters on my hands and have to get ready for work by 6 a.m. I lived and breathed music. Fast forward thirty-plus years and I'd recorded three albums, played over 700 gigs, toured around the country several times and taught hundreds of students.

This is my pattern, my way of doing stuff! The same thing happened with martial arts. I spent seven years building up my skills in Wing Chun Kung Fu with World Champion Sifu Rick Spain, training every day. After earning my black belt, I moved on to Judo, Jow Ga and, currently, Shaolin Monk Kung Fu. It was like that with cycling, personal training . . . and so on.

My magnificent obsession

I do everything I do to the level of obsession. I have a saying: *'If your gonna do something, do it to the death, jump in with both feet.'* Become what it is, you are doing. It's the same in business: if you want to succeed, then you need to be obsessed with it. Anthony Robbins put it best: *'There is no good or bad time to start a business; it's only bad if you start a mediocre business.'* Most business owners fail because they treat their business more like a hobby than an obsession, and as a result, they don't do what it takes to get there. They fail to go the extra mile, which unfortunately often happens to be the one mile that counts for ultimate success.

An obsession is an idea or thought that constantly preoccupies or intrudes on a person's mind. UPology is my magnificent obsession. It was born out of my determination to help business owners and managers to succeed and to own and/or operate the business they deserve. The drive for more is what I want to share here. UPology is chosen to see the world as a glass half-full rather than as a glass half-empty. To gain the perspective you need to make this choice, you must first understand the glass.

This book is about my obsession, my drive for perfection, my need to take people to the next level. By sharing my knowledge, I want to help provide a blueprint for success by setting out the principles needed to succeed. To be fair, it's more than that for me personally: my passion to help others helps fulfil a need in me that is deep-seated in all of us: to be accepted and loved by others, and by ourselves.

UPology is about transforming yourself and your business, raising them to another level where you get to understand your *purpose*, the true meaning of your life. It's about recovering from life's beatings (more of which I will share soon). I believe that through embracing your business or career truly, you can find your purpose. It's amazing how many people I meet who seem to think you need to sit on a mountain in Tibet to find meaning in your life. Perhaps it's true for some,

but for me life's purpose is simply about contributing and living congruently.

I have found that doing what you love to do through your business is the path to purpose. It's a concept that will be understood by anyone who has studied a martial art for long enough to have shed blood, sweat and tears. In fact, anyone who has fiercely pursued an obsession, whether it's building model aircraft, base jumping or origami, understands that it's more than just a single act or process. It's about finding purpose, being inspired, because as Dr Wayne Dyer says, '*to be inspired is to be in spirit*'. To be *in spirit* in business is to be connected to what Dr John Demartini calls GOD, the 'Grand Organized Design', the creative force that is abundant and limitless. Yes, that's you!

The birth of Upology

At first, it didn't have a name; it didn't even look or feel like what it is now. The obsession road recalls Richard Dawkins' work on mimetic structures in his famous book, *The Selfish Gene*: it's 'survival of the fittest'. Over and over again, I tested ideas, asking questions, probing for how I could be congruent with the message, and produce a system for success. I attended countless seminars and lectures, read hundreds of books and studied with some amazing people, but still there seemed to be something missing. Many of the so-called gurus out there give you either all the mindset concepts or, at the other end, all the numbers and systems: do this and you will make bazillion dollars.

Business is about numbers . . . No; it's about mindset . . . Ever heard this? I have — to death, and I'm tired of it! I have had countless arguments with 'experts' who insist it must be about one or the other — well, I beg to differ. For me, it was always about more than that. If it were that easy, then you could guarantee success simply by becoming either really good at the numbers of stuff or a pure Jedi of the mind. If it were that easy, then business wouldn't be *busyness*. Think about this for a second: There is enough information to fill football fields on how to get your mind right, on positive thinking, and yet four out of five businesses go broke in the first 12 months. There are vast numbers of

books, CDs and DVDs on management, leadership, finance and systems, all claiming to offer the secret to business success, yet more than 88 per cent of all change management fails — even with the best leaders at the helm. Their efforts still tend to fall short. Why?

I was obsessed with the burning need to find the answer — well, at least the answer for me. Ten years later, after much searching, tears and pulling my hair out (maybe that is why I'm bald, though I thought it was hereditary!), the sum of everything that had happened in my life over the past 40-plus years brought me to a single point. I remember going over to one of my mentors at the time, Matt Church, and saying, 'Matt, there's all this stuff inside me . . . I can't sleep [even though I think sleep is overrated, that we'll have plenty of time to sleep when we're dead!] and I can't get it out'. I felt like Sigourney Weaver in *Aliens*: there was a monster in my chest wanting to bust out. I felt like I was pregnant with an idea, and the birthing process wasn't going to be easy or painless.

The conversation went back and forth until it hit us. Matt shouted, 'It's UP!' I thought he meant our session time was up so the first thing I did was to look at the clock, but I saw we still had a while to go. 'Up?', then I thought about this for a moment (which felt like a month). Matt went on, 'You're the guy who never gives UP — you just keep on getting UP when you get knocked down'.

This was, as *Star Trek's* Dr Spock said, the beginning of the journey. I had one word and now I had to build on this, so I began gathering my thoughts. I didn't sleep much over the next few weeks, what with my obsessive nature and caffeine . . . not a good mix.

What was it that I could create, that I could express? What were the unmet challenges of all the business books I had read? Moving past the books, I began thinking about the sorts of problems I have encountered in all my years in business, in life coaching, in the martial arts, through a failed marriage and unhealthy partnerships, and then the

flipside — all the great businesses I had run and sold, all the love and great experiences I had had.

So up came the idea of *UPology*. Why? Well, UP alone didn't seem complete. It didn't really express the whole, and it was restricted to the singular. I needed a process, a system, a prototype. As it turned out, what I was looking for had always been right there in front of me. It had just been masked. I read today that *you* create every challenge in life, and every one can teach you things — you can learn from it. My life experiences revealed two fundamental elements that led towards *UPology*. These elements are the principles of yin and yang (or balance), and the idea of constant rebirth and reinvention, as represented by the Ouroboros.

The balance of life — yin and yang

In traditional Chinese culture, the *yin* principle represents the moon, water, softness, accepting, stillness and intuition. In business, it shows itself as flexibility in decision-making, adaptation to the external and internal environment, and caring for staff and clients. The *yang* principle, on the other hand, represents the sun; it is fire, but also hard and rigid. In business, it is manifested as firmness in decision-making, assertiveness, accumulation, resistance to change and authoritarian approaches.

The key in business and in life, I believe, is that finding a balance between these principles means making conscious, considered choices. When we learn too much, in one way or the other, we have the ability to correct ourselves. Most of the time, we operate somewhere in the middle. Few decisions are black and white; we mostly deal in shades of grey. This is clearly demonstrated by the ebb and flow of business as it responds to such things as new developments, financial positioning, work-life balance and time management.

The idea is to bring balance to your business by first introducing it into your life. Your business life correlates directly with your personal life. Look for the signs. They are all around you — you just need to

tune in and become aware of them. In order to grow, we need to move out of our comfort zone, to experience both yin and yang, as one cannot exist without the other. You can never determine your business's success and/or challenges unless you have a sense of an opposing viewpoint that you can use as an anchor to compare against and measure where you are now.

There's more to the story. Yin and yang also represent the idea of *duality* — up/down, left/right, wet/dry good/evil and so on. You see, we are not always Anthony Robbins full-of-beans Mr Positives. Sometimes we're flat, depressed or downright angry. The key is, understanding this (I'll share more on this later).

For me, the principle also represents growth. Almost all greatness happens on the edge of destruction, right out there at our limits, where real growth and change happen. Have you ever noticed that it is when you're in a tough situation, where everything depends on your action or decision, that you really shine?

The line where yin and yang meet gives us the set point of stability or safety to which we need to return sooner or later. It's impossible to be full out all the time, but the same can be said about doing nothing — sooner or later we need to pick up our game.

The Ouroboros

The ancient symbol of the Ouroboros represents the continued circle of reinvention; when one door closes, another opens. The key to self-improvement is evolving oneself. I have always been restless, always searching for what's next. Have you ever found that, once you have accomplished your goal, the first thing that comes into your head is 'So what's next?' Well, you're not alone. That has been the theme of my life, and it's what keeps me on the edge of doing my best, as I'll settle for nothing less. In business, it's about staying 'fresh' and one step ahead. One of the keys to survival in today's business environment is Constant Strategic Innovation. This means, constantly looking out for

what's coming, where the next wave is forming, where your business environment is heading.

Most people rest on their laurels, settling for yesterday's success. You've heard it over and over again: 'the good old days'. For people who live in the past, it was when they were truly alive. In today's world, we are living longer but 'dying' earlier. So many people are trapped in a shitty job, a shitty relationship and a shitty life, still using tools and skills that worked for them in 'the good old days'. In those days, anything was possible, when taking on a problem was exciting, and when looking for an answer was part of the parcel. By dying earlier, I mean they reach a point where they are just going through the motions, too fearful to break out of the 'matrix'. The theory of constant reinvention is that it keeps the mind fresh and the spirit excited to do more, to be more and to explore new possibilities.

We have been programmed, through the generations, to believe that we are *static*, that we are somehow disconnected from the *flow* of life. Once you pick your job or business in your youth, you are set on a certain path, and you find you need the certainty this path offers. You cease to question life. Isn't it interesting though that, when you really think about it, the only certainty in life is change itself? Everything is in flux. Life starts and stops. Do you know that businesses that were here 100 years ago, or even 10 years ago, are now gone. So why is it that most business owners never change or adapt?

Native American Indians understood they were custodians of Mother Earth, and that all life follows cycles, so when the land they occupied started to become barren they moved to greener pastures, allowing the old land to restore and revitalise itself. Does this ring a bell? Is your business due for a reinvention or revitalisation? Take a moment and think about it. When did you last take a snapshot of what's going on in your business and personal life? How is the 'soil' in and outside your business? Do you need to reinvent yourself and adapt to the changing environment?

One of the concepts I will share with you in the coming chapters is adapting your strategy to the external and internal environments (more on this in chapter 5). Combining the two fundamentals — the life balance and duality expressed in the principles of yin and yang, and the constant reinvention of yourself and business, as expressed by the Ouroboros — is the bedrock on which this book is based.

Rather than a book on business stuff that you put into action, forgetting all about having a life, I wanted to discover a ‘way’ *for* business or life. You live it, breathe it and become it! UPology offers a model, a blueprint, a road map for living, working and *evolving!* It includes a step-by-step methodology, a formula that if followed and acted upon and constantly challenged, will provide you with the success you are looking for, whether it’s in business, in life or in relationships. We’ve all been blessed with the power of independent thought and decision-making. I will encourage you, the reader, to adapt the four principles constantly through making deliberate, conscious choices.

UPology is about the overarching fundamentals and the four principles. Making the choice to apply these four principles is just as important as the principles themselves (I will explain this further soon). The four principles are the backbone of the UPology formula. Beyond and within these four principles is the attitude essential for their successful application — what I call the UPology attitude. Let’s explore this now.

The UPology attitude

For years, I have studied with great mentors, read hundreds of books and searched for the thread that links all forward thinkers. Time and time again, it comes down to *attitude* — the attitude you bring to your business and relationships. Now the best part about this is that, whatever the circumstances, you have the power to change your attitude. This is what I love about the human mind — it is programmable; it can get stronger and its potential is limitless. Its filing system is immeasurable. The UPology attitude is about never giving up; it’s about understanding you need to take only a few more steps to accomplish

what you set out to do and, importantly, *there is no failure — only feedback*. Learn from this and keep moving forward.

Over and over again, I meet business owners who, in hindsight, come to recognise that they were so close to having a great business, but because of a weak attitude they just threw up their hands too soon, believing they were defeated. They became victims to their challenges or beatings and never recovered from them. I use the word ‘weak’ here, because I believe attitude is not about right and wrong but about choices and about conditioning. I have come to realise that there are many attitudes, including the defeated attitude, the cocky attitude and the ‘I don’t give a damn’ attitude. I won’t cover them all here, but I will highlight a few and show how real and important attitude is.

Everything you have and may have in future can be directly related to your attitude at any given point in your life or the life of your business. For example, you have probably met people who demonstrate a ‘glass half-empty’s attitude. You know the ones: no matter what the circumstances they always complain, justify their negativity and make excuses for failure. I remember meeting a guy at a party who told me he had won the lotto. I said that’s awesome! His next words were unexpected, to say the least. In a griping, slightly angry voice he said, ‘Yeah, it was just my luck that ten others won it too, so I only got \$150K. How fucked is that!’ Can you see what I mean by a weak attitude? Anyone who works at it through constant education, reinvention, communication and, sometimes, silence (otherwise known as meditation) can strengthen their attitude. High achievers and UPologists (people who study and apply the UPology way of business or life), always demonstrate a ‘glass half- full’ attitude!

For most business owners who fail, the problem begins well before the business itself; it starts with a defeated attitude, and this can begin as early as in the womb. Research is revealing that communication, conversation, sounds and feelings (angry or calm, happy or sad) may be conveyed to a foetus at a subconscious level, only to manifest themselves at a later stage in life. As children, we will have heard the word

“no” about 140,000 times by the age of three. Do you think that might influence our attitude later in life?

Business owners, who face a setback, through poor or inadequate planning or through no fault of their own, will record this event mentally as a ‘failure’, or what I call a beating. This may happen again and again — It doesn’t have to be catastrophic; it can just be something small. Maybe I pitched for a job, and was turned down, or a client came into the store and I spent 30 minutes with him, and then he told me he would get back to me and simply walked out. What happens is that every time you’re in a similar situation the entire file tends to come flooding back and then you start to ‘believe’, this being the operative word, that you are defeated — hence the defeatist attitude.

The UPology attitude is founded on *strength through certainty*. We are born with the potential to become anything we wish, no limits, then through years of what I call ‘paper-machéing the soul’, we start to lose our way. The UPology attitude is about reconnecting with the source of energy that every human being possesses. Our ancestors did endure hardships that would make many of us curl up in a ball and cry. They migrated to a new land, built a future for themselves and their family from nothing. They were forced to make choices that developed a ‘do whatever it takes’ to survive approach. Where has this strength of purpose disappeared to in our society of weak attitudes?

Imagine you woke up tomorrow and tapped into that UPology attitude, and how your life might begin to be reshaped. Well, guess what, you can! You see, this potential flows through you. Let me show you where it is.

Have you ever faced a choice where you were so sure you were right that you made your decision regardless of the outcome? The same force assures you with an unwavering certainty that, for instance, you are heterosexual or homosexual or that your body isn’t for sale at any price. You know what I’m talking about. This is the power you have at your disposal. We all have it. What the UPology attitude is all about is,

tapping into this unlimited source of assurance that we may think of as our 'spirit'. I said earlier that it is about conditioning and learning how to tap into this source. As a business owner, just by having this attitude and tapping into this power source, you have already made half the journey. The UPologist looks at any situation and arrives at a decision (whether favourable or not) with an attitude of certainty. The UPology attitude doesn't mean always making the *right* decision, which attaches you to the outcome. If it doesn't turn out as you planned, that's okay, you'll learn from that and try, try, try again.

The more positive our conditioning of the attitude, the higher our mental resilience levels and the easier it becomes to handle challenging situations, which become less about the outcome and more about the journey. How can you achieve this? You can do it by surrounding yourself with empowered people, reading materials that help you understand yourself and your business, learning to visually focus on certainty, and making a choice to say no to anything that has weak or defeated associations. A defeated or weak attitude, on the other hand, will keep you spiralling down the path of fear. Going on and on about how bad things are in the business and how shit always happens to you and you have no choice and that's all you can do — expectations of failure are self-fulfilling. We all have the same basic makeup and potential. I'm here to tell you that shit happens to all of us, so if this is you, you're not special. It's how you deal with it that's important.

Creating an UPology attitude is always a work in progress; it never ends. We need to constantly reinvent ourselves in our efforts to get as close as we can to the first principle of yin and yang — balance! The secrets to an UPology attitude are certainty, source, choice and balance. Be positive with yourself, making the best choices for you at any given time. Maintain an attitude of certainty based on your knowledge. Most business owners are highly skilled in their profession, although many business decisions don't call on the same skill set that they need in their profession. Figuring out financial positioning and projections for a bakery is completely different from the art of baking cakes. Therefore, it only makes sense that an attitude of strength is based on

knowing your stuff. That way, you can confidently make educated decisions while also tapping the inbuilt sensory mechanism commonly referred to as your 'gut feeling'. The reason the gut is so sensitive, by the way, is that the abdominals have two nerve endings per muscle, which is the most in any of the muscular system. In addition, research suggests it has an energy field around it that is even more powerful than the one located in the heart and the brain.

The UPologist attitude accepts the value to be gained from the accumulation of trials, setbacks and challenges. How will you ever change if you never try? Remember, you are created from a source that is all knowing, always with you and perfectly made for you.

Chapter 2: My sister's story

"Either you can get busy trying to live or you can get busy dying — it's your choice."

- Josephine Mercieca

My sister Josephine (Jo) and I were born 10 years apart. She looked after me as far back as I can remember. My parents were always working and there was no day care back then, so you made do the best you could. I recall only glimpses from that far back but I know she did her best, what with her being a teenager in the sixties, and she always loved me. She told me not too long ago that I used to call her 'Ma'. My oldies were strict, and from what I understand, she never really had the freedom to do what she wanted. I do remember a curfew of about 8.30 on the nights we went to parties. Of course, they'd been young once and I suppose they realised what the sixties were all about and the possible dangers. Looking back, I see my sister as very caring, much like my dad, but I feel there was always much more she wanted to accomplish. I get a sense of 'Well, that's the way it is for me' — even then, she had this lack of confidence about her.

We lived in Malta for four years until I was 12, and then returned to Australia after Jo married a good man. So in 1980, we lived in Sydney, at Brighton Le Sands, together with my parents for about six months until they got a place of their own out at Quakers Hill. For me, this was cool, as I have to choose the bedroom I wanted. A few years went by and my parents and I drifted apart a bit, and I only really saw them on weekends, as the trip from Brighton to Quakers Hill was epic, to say the least.

The gift

The next thing I knew, my sister was pregnant and we got the call that she'd had a baby boy. We had no cell phones then, just the good old landline. Finally, we got to the Blacktown Hospital, which was new at the time. For some reason my parents were worryingly quiet during

the trip, and when we got to the hospital they asked me to wait outside for a while. Those minutes felt like months. Finally, the door opened. I remember walking into a grey room with fluoro lights, one of which was flickering on and off, where my sister was sitting in a wheelchair facing the window, weeping. I'm thinking to myself, what's going on here? Shouldn't this be a happy occasion?

I looked around and saw my dad crying like someone had died. I mean, this man never, ever cried. He kept repeating in Maltese, *Ara xi gralna*, which roughly translates to 'Look at what's happened to us', with an intensity of sorrow that I'd witness again only at my uncle's funeral years later. My mum and brother-in-law, Ray, were in the same state. I remember taking a few steps back to where my sister was sitting and asking her, 'Jo, what's going on? Why is everyone crying?' I asked a few times but got no answer. I could hear her saying something over and over again, in a faint voice in between the crying. She then looked up at me with sadness that I'll never forget and asked, 'Will I ever be able to love him? Why did God do this to us?'

My nephew James was born with a birth defect that meant his arms were not completely formed. Added to this, because of a complication with the formation of his nervous system in the shoulder and chest region he also had a defective heart. Ironically, my sister's obsession is hands (mine is feet), but her first son is born with no hands (just a few little fingers). You can imagine the guilt she was carrying, giving birth to this innocent little child that is starting life with such a handicap.

Within a few weeks, James is back in hospital for open-heart surgery. It was the first of many operations, including surgery to give him something that resembles a thumb where our elbow is. Three years and many hospital visits later, after carefully seeking advice from many medical experts, who assured her that all would be well, she was pregnant again. Paul was born with same problem with his limbs, although not as major. So my sister and her husband relived their ordeal.

The turning point

Things were going okay. The kids were studying, and doing all the things kids usually do at age 12 and 15. Life was good. My sister had bought a home in Sans Souci — a modest little house with room to grow. She began investing in the stock market, beavering away for the kids' future. Soon she had diversified her portfolio into two investment units and built the family nest egg. Then one day, in September of the year 2001, everything went drastically wrong after two planes hit two-office towers in New York, hurling the world, and most particularly her world, into chaos. Almost overnight, Jo lost her accumulated assets of more than \$500,000 and had to sell everything she had worked so hard for in her life. By this time, James, who was 16, was also doing it tough as he tried to fit in high school while starting to experience his handicap through the eyes of other young teenagers.

Three years later, eight years after a massive stroke had rendered him speechless and paralysed down one side, my father passed away, which I believe was brought on by the truckloads of medication he was taking and, even more, by the bitter reality of living for years with stomach cancer on top of his other debilities. The family was devastated, even though we had known the day would come, but James took it the hardest because of the close relationship he had had with his grandfather growing up.

In 2006, my sister faced another beating. While still putting the pieces of her life back together again, she started to feel a pain in her lower abdomen and, thinking she might have an infection or a cyst, she decided to visit the doctor. After undergoing tests, she learned she had stage 3 uterine cancers and had to be operated on immediately. So in December 2006, she had emergency surgery to remove her uterus. The operation was a success but she moved on to courses in chemo and radiotherapy just to make sure, as a result of which she lost 15 kg and along with all her hair and eyebrows. By then she was looking like death but somehow she still found the courage to go on. The family was the driving force here.

Jo recovered slowly, but because of the hospital bills and her extended period without work, she and Ray were now even further in debt and were forced to sell the Aussie dream home they had worked so hard for. It took time to let go of the life they had created and adjust to living in a completely different area, but she was philosophical about it: 'That's how it is and we just keep going.' The family were still together, living under one roof — that's what mattered.

The brothers

By now James and Paul were doing what young men do in their twenties, including going out partying and looking for women. That's what I saw on the surface, but with James at least things were not as they seemed. My sister was concerned about the lifestyle he was leading and the people he was hanging out with. Out of work, he took to the life of a professional gambler and stayed out until the early hours of the morning. The arguments were getting worse, as well as his depression and destructive behaviour. She had told me only parts of this, perhaps feeling this was a family matter that needed to be contained. Realising that the behaviour — the worsening depression and long days of crying, lack of communication and sleeping all day — had reached a crisis point, I offered what help I could both as his uncle and as a holistic life coach, as I was at the time.

I thought I could set him on the right track by coaching him to keep his mind occupied through exercise and a sense of purpose, but I found my efforts had little or no effect on his behaviour. I remember during one of our sessions pleading with him: 'What can I do to help, James? Please tell me and I'll do it. I can't stand seeing you like this. You're my flesh and blood too!' I'll never forget the look of despair he gave me.

'Uncle Nick, if you make my arms and hands grow back, then you can help. If not, you can do *nothing*. No one can!'

How could I respond to that?

James's behavioural problems continued, with my sister copping the brunt of his anger, mood swings and yelling — the blame he was dishing out to her and Ray that was tearing the family apart. Added to this she was still recovering from the cancer treatments, the financial losses, the move to a new area and the consequent loss of support from my mum, who had lived in the next street. Things, needless to say, weren't coming up roses. My sister, though, was concerned not for her own wellbeing but only for that of her son, whom she felt incapable of helping, because she couldn't give him the two things he wanted most: his arms and, ultimately, a woman's love. He had always told me that even without his arms he would be okay if he could find a woman to love him. He had friends, of course, but that wasn't the same as a girlfriend or partner. It wasn't for lack of trying on his part or lack of confidence; it just seemed that the women he met couldn't see beyond his so-called handicap.

You see, James was one of the brightest young men I know. His HSC results placed him in the top three in the state; he was accepted into four universities before he had even completed his HSC. His problem wasn't academic; it was physical, emotional and, worst of all, mental. He had convinced himself that no woman was ever going to love him or want to be with him. The mind can be the monster within that drives you to madness.

The life changer

On Easter Sunday 2009, I was at my sister's place sitting on the couch in the living room after a feast that as usual entailed enough food to feed 500 people, though there were only 10 of us. The afternoon was cloudy but dry and we were inside watching the TV, doing the dishes, chatting — Well, level 10 borderline shouting with one another, the gold standard for communicating in any Maltese gathering. The moment in time came, the memory of which would be later etched into my psyche. James was crouching down to the height of my son Phillip (named after my father), telling him, how much he loved him and that he was his favourite cousin. The light was behind him and for a moment it seemed as though the noise of the room ebbed away and in

that split second, observing James and my son together, I felt I was really connected to him and it seemed like all the demons in his head were on hold. I remember thinking to myself that James looked happy and that this was something I hadn't seen for a long time. Looking back on it now, I realise I also felt a sense of guilt thinking how lucky I was to have a son who didn't face the challenges James faced. The day wound down until at about 8 o'clock, we decided it was time to take Phillip and our baby girl Tiana home.

The next day was a public holiday. My favourite way of celebrating these holidays was hanging out, and doing nothing much: maybe a barbecue and a picnic in winter or the beach in summer. But that day wasn't just a typical rainy day — it was pouring relentlessly. It was around five when I got a call from Paul to tell me that James had been involved in an accident and was at St Georges Hospital. I wasn't yet overly alarmed. It was still pouring when I got to the hospital, parked the car and walked into emergency. Straight away, a nurse took me to a room where Paul, Jo and Ray sat waiting. I remember the room was painted a shitty institution green marked by the scrapes and scuffs typically found in a busy emergency unit. I learned that James had been brought in by ambulance and the doctors were still working on him. A few minutes later a paramedic walked in with a police officer and asked us to sit down.

'How is he?' my sister asked again.

'Well, we're not yet sure,' replied the paramedic, 'but we can tell you we have 10 doctors working on him and that we were working on him at the scene.'

What I felt then I still find hard to put into words, but I can tell you it was a feeling I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. I remember thinking I could handle this but I had to act fast, me being the big-time life coach, so I tried to console my sister and the family. I kept saying we couldn't jump to conclusions. Before he left, though, the doctor turned

to my sister and asked, 'Are you religious? Because now would be a good time to pray.'

Fifteen minutes later he came back, this time with an emergency doctor whose solemn expression indicated that what he was about to share with us wasn't good. So we learned that James had sustained very severe head injuries, that he remained unconscious and that despite their best efforts he would not recover. He had been kept alive by breathing apparatus, but there was nothing more they could do. It took a few moments for this to sink in. It felt like a bad dream had all at once turned into my worst nightmare.

It's amazing how quickly grief and shock cut in. Instantly, I felt sick and struggled to collect my senses. We went straight into the emergency room where he laid, tubes in his mouth, blood everywhere, lifeless. The next minute I found myself stroking him, crying as never before, and feeling a grief that was draining the soul out of me. I cried for hours. It was far more intense than I'd felt when I lost my father. I remember Ray caressing James's face, pleading with him to wake up, my sister collapsed on the floor, Paul slapping his own face in the extremity of his grief. By now, my mum had walked in and almost collapsed, clutching at him, willing him to come back. The pain flowed through my body uncontrollably. James's friends started to arrive, unleashing further shock, turmoil and hysterical tears. The room filled with more than a hundred people in the space of an hour.

The funeral

For a week they kept James on life support, or at least they kept him breathing (in reality there was no 'life') to preserve his organs, having gained my sister's agreement to donate them to others in need. She knew this would have been that gentle soul's wish. On the morning of the funeral, I woke with a gut-wrenching ache, knowing the day was going to be a bad one. It's the same feeling every time I lose a loved one — my father and my uncle had died only months before — but this felt a thousand times worse.

The local Catholic Church that usually held about 500 was overflowing — I reckoned some three times that number must have showed up, with many of them unable to fit into the church. Bear in mind that James was not a celebrity or in the public spotlight. He certainly never believed he was anyone of importance; in fact, he believed that no one really cared about him and that most people thought him a freak.

The service lasted for about one and a half hours. I used the eulogy to try to lighten the sadness, reading a piece called ‘The Making of a Legend’, which was received with thunderous applause in James’s honour. I suggested that my sister, Ray and Paul marvel at the legacy James had left and at how many lives he had touched.

Your children should never go before you, and no one should have to go through the experience we went through. James was carried to the hearse and off we went to Botany Cemetery, where my 24-year-old nephew was interred beside my father in the plot prepared for my mother. There was something horribly wrong with that picture. At the graveside I thought, ‘If this was my son it would be better that they just dig a bigger hole so I could lie next to him’. More than 1000 people had gathered — so many they were three deep and you couldn’t see any of the other graves.

They say that death is a natural part of living, but I’m still trying to figure that one out. James has gone, and he would never come back. Life is so precious it is hard for us to let go and to rebuild any sense of normality after such a tragedy.

The question

A few weeks went by and finally the numbness started to subside and I collected my thoughts enough to write to my sister about my sorrow and the guilt I felt that I was unable to help James and that it was her son rather mine who had suffered so. After all the bad luck she had experienced, why had life been so hard on her?

By now, my sister was undergoing a grieving process that reflected her pain, anger, hurt and helplessness against forces she could not control. The cycles of grief had taken hold of her mind so she was finding it difficult to function on any level of normality. People around her sought to console her with programmable responses like ‘I can imagine what you are going through’ or ‘This is God’s way — he’s now at peace and with God’. It’s amazing how inadequate words seem in such situations. I would try to divert the conversation and lighten the mood with a joke or by talking about ordinary, mindless things like what she was going to do over the weekend. This was my way of not dealing with the raw wound.

For the first six months, I couldn’t even look at his photo. Eight months or so went by and my grieving sister was fading in and out of depression.

Some days were okay; on others, she wanted only to be beside him in the cold ground. I could only imagine the pain she was going through.

Like James, my sister never believed she was anything special, convinced she lived an ordinary life, just like everyone else. I knew better! She had been through so much heartache; so many hard life experiences that most ‘average’ people would barely have recovered from. In my years as a life coach, I have seen many a person spiral into years of depression over financial losses alone. My sister is different. She has the same blood flowing through her that I have, but she has a strength that makes Lance Armstrong look like a baby.

I remember asking her the question and her reply that changed the way I looked at my life and every situation from that day forward. I asked her, ‘How do you keep going? What gets you up in the morning?’ Her answer played a part in shaping my future and helped nudge me towards writing this book.

‘It’s how you look at it. You can get busy trying to live, or you can get busy dying — it’s your choice. I still have another son, so I need to look

after him and keep going.’ These words resonated to my core and were a massive inspiration. If she had this strength in her, I thought, then so must I because we are made from the same mould. If she can go through this and come out the other side, then I can surely accomplish anything. It’s just a matter of looking at things from a different perspective, picking up the pieces and moving forward. I figured out that I too must always have had this inner strength, this drive, this determination to get back up no matter what and get going again. Life has thrown a fair number of curve balls at me and I’ve managed to come through without too many bumps and bruises.

The trip

About a year and a half after James’s death, Jo and Ray decided to take time out from all the madness to reconnect with each other. In trying to deal with the tragedy that had rocked their lives, they had forgotten to take care of each other. So they planned a special holiday, booked the tickets, paid the travel insurance and flew off for a week in Hawaii, a cruise around the islands and a week in Las Vegas. However, it seemed that life had further beatings to direct their way.

A few weeks later, in Vegas, my sister noticed that Ray was starting to walk more slowly and was quickly running out of breath. He admitted to feeling a little tired and thought he might be coming down with ‘a slight flu’, so she thought nothing of it and they kept on doing their stuff. Four days into their visit, while walking to their hotel, Ray almost fainted. Sitting down, he began to sweat and complained of being short of breath. Soon afterwards, he was rushed by ambulance to hospital, where, after a series of tests, he was admitted to intensive care in the cardiac unit. The surgeon identified heart problems. Tests revealed a massive amount of fluid around his heart. Another half an hour and he could have suffered a massive, fatal heart attack.

By this time, my sister was thinking she was about to lose her husband. With a high risk of a heart attack or stroke, Ray was definitely not leaving the hospital in a hurry. To top it off, before doing anything else, the hospital quizzed my sister on their insurance cover, to which

she confidently replied, 'Oh yes, we have the top policy: Better to be safe than sorry, right!'

After a few days in intensive care, Ray received a visit from the hospital's insurance representative, who told them he believed their policy didn't cover this particular ailment but that he would investigate it further, and in the meantime, the hospital would continue to provide the necessary care. A few weeks passed and Ray was on the road to recovery, although still in intensive care. My sister continued to support her husband while coping largely on her own.

The call

Hallelujah! The plane touched down and they were back on home soil at last. The following day's mail included a letter from the insurance company asking her to contact them urgently. There was much complex medical terminology and legal fine print, but the gist of it was clear: their policy would not cover Ray's medical costs, which would have to be reimbursed in full out of their own pocket. They would learn the total amount when contacted by the hospital insurance rep in the next 48 hours.

By now, my sister had begun the spiral into depression all over again. How could this be happening to them? What had they done to deserve it? I suggested she seek legal advice immediately, which she did, while their worry mounted day by day. The 48 hours turned into five days of uncertainty. The legal counsel amounted to no more than: 'Sorry, there's nothing we can do. Legally you're liable, and you might want to pay rather than taking on a corporate giant you won't beat': So much for that.

My sister was very good at disguising her pain. 'I'm okay, everything's fine,' she would say, but as her sibling, I could tell when everything wasn't fine. She finally got the call: 'Mrs Mercieca, we have reviewed your case and find you owe us US\$65,000, to be paid within 14 days. If you can pay more quickly, we would be happy to drop the amount to \$62,000.'

You can imagine her reaction. She spoke to me soon afterwards, and this was the first time I feared she might do something she would regret. I could sense her spirit dying. What could she do? She had no money, no realisable assets, a debilitated husband and a dead son.

The case is still pending, and for now, my sister is still attempting to negotiate a settlement with the insurance company and the hospital.

A few months after the Las Vegas ordeal, a specialist found scarring on Ray's lungs, perhaps due to a genetic defect, that pointed to a serious condition for which there's no real cure, just medication and/or a transplant. Effectively, he has the lungs of an old man. Ray's life expectancy has been reduced dramatically; his quality of life is okay so far, but the prognosis isn't good. The news was yet another body blow that Jo and Ray have had to deal with.

The reason I wanted to share this story is to demonstrate how so-called 'ordinary' people can move through life's struggles with a stubborn, persistent courage that society tends to think is the preserve of 'extraordinary' figures such as the elite athlete or superstar. How wrong are they!

Inspiration

Everyone who reads this book has the capacity to change the way he/she looks at things. It's about developing an 'attitude of gratitude' and 'having a goal' (another Aussie expression). For me, the inspiration of the silent warrior who is my sister has shown me I have nothing to complain about and nothing to regret, that all of life's opportunities lie ahead of me.

You have the choice of dying on your feet or living on your knees. It's UP to you. As Wayne Dyer puts it, 'Change the way you look at things and the things you look at will change.' My sister's story, like the seven billion other stories on the planet, is unique. We are all here, coping as best we can. Sometimes the harshest environment is our mind. The

two kilograms of grey matter may heal us or kill us, depending on the way we look at things.

For business owners, the truth of this resonates through to the core of the business: everything can be either a struggle or a triumph. The lessons I have learned from my life experience, with all its trials and tribulation, are the sum total of where I stand today. It's not all rainbows and butterflies, but that's the beauty of it. If everything was perfect in your life, how would you ever know?

I'd like to share with you a few words I often repeat to myself and to others I speak to: 'As long as I'm standing straight and breathing air, that's a good start.' What's your mantra? How do you look at each situation you encounter?

I decided to add another tattoo to my body to give me a daily reminder — remember, I told you I was obsessive by nature! This way, I figure, I can never forget. I have several tattoos that mark special events or another chapter in my life. My right shoulder has a shield with a yin and yang to signify safety and balance; my left arm up to half a sleeve has a traditional Maori tattoo symbolising family, values, the warrior spirit, stability and honour; on the left side of my chest my father's and son's name is close to my heart. Most recently, I have added James's. This's a unique tattoo — it is the Angel of Grief. No other angel cries with his or her head down to signify the broken heart.

Every morning I step in front of the mirror and remember the loss; most importantly, I remember the inspiration, the blessing of the 24 years I shared with him, and the fine job my sister and Ray did in raising him. I will have his spirit with me until the last day I draw breath. I can tell you that some days are hard, that some days I'm not 'Mr Positive', as some have called me, but I remember who I am, that the blood that flows through me also flows through my sister, and who the driver on this voyage is — ME.

Chapter 3: Mindset programming: uncovering the truth

*“Stronger than mighty armies is an idea
Whose time has come.”*

- Victor Hugo

A great deal has already been written comparing the human mind and mindset to the internet: all this information is available out there, but much of it is impractical or gives us only a part of the story. I want to share with you what I have used and learned — to show why *mindset* (setting the mind) is critical to our overall journey, and how the first principle provides the foundation for all that follows. First, I must urge you that instead of taking everything you read here on trust, look for opportunities to test and apply the ideas to your own unique set of circumstances. One man’s sun is another man’s rain. My intention is to write down what has worked for me, but it isn’t a case of one size fits all, so I encourage you to take what you want and leave the rest.

Contemplating the world has always intrigued me, but it has not always been as productive for me as it is these days. I grew up in an immigrant family where a contemplative life — reading philosophy and asking ‘deeper’ questions — was looked upon as wasting your time: ‘How will that ever help you make money?’ I don’t blame my parents, family or friends for this, or even my teachers. They didn’t understand that, like all those who went before them, they were products of their environment. I am referring, here, to the programming that we all undergo; what Richard Dawkins has called *mimetic structures*. These structures come in all shapes and sizes. There are far too many of them to cover here, so I’ll introduce only those I see as most relevant to this book — and to your ability to overcome the invisible obstacles to achieving success as you always dreamed it.

Programming: viruses of the mind

Our programming begins in our earliest years of development, first through our parents then through others such as teachers. It spreads like a virus: memetic structures are like viruses of the mind. The mind gets sick just as the body catches a cold, except the 'flu' can last a lifetime if we don't treat it. It starts, harmlessly enough, around the one-year mark with well-meaning words of caution and the occasional 'No' and 'Don't do that' from our loved ones. It increases as children reach the terrible twos. Do you think this affects the energy of these children? Very much so, I believe. Most of the time at that age we look to our parents and others close to us as the models, providers, even heroes. So of course, whatever they say must be gospel. The intensity of programming really kicks in around the three- to four-year-old mark, with hundreds of thousands of words and edicts contributing to the viral transfer: 'No, don't do that', 'Don't be silly', 'If you loved me you wouldn't', 'Listen to what Mummy tells you', 'Don't answer back to me' — you get the drift.

Psychologically, these dictates embed themselves at a subconscious level and later return to play themselves out at interesting times, without our consciously realising it. Memetic structures have a life of their own and they will sacrifice the host at all costs. I know that sounds a little out there but think of it like this. Have you ever had an idea and decided to do something and, even though you knew, it might harm you, gone ahead with it anyway? For example, you knew that getting into a particular business deal was not a good decision, but the thought 'I need the money' won supremacy, so you convinced yourself and, guess what, the idea (memetic structure) wins. The thought process overrides logic and everything you know is true. All this comes from the programming we receive as we grow up.

Another way this plays out is in our confidence. I remember one time when I was six years old my parents freaked out so badly about my not eating the white part of a boiled egg that after both of them had screamed at me they made me sit on our backyard fence in the middle of winter for about an hour. Further aggravated by my crying they

went inside, brought out the egg and rubbed it into my face until it dried. Then they packed a suitcase, escorted me out of the house and told me to find somewhere else to live because I was a bad boy. As you could imagine, being just six years old my self-worth was rocked to the core by this experience. This manifested itself in my non-acceptance in a new school where I'd hoped so much to be a part of a group, dredging up feelings of isolation and thoughts of 'I must be useless'.

Later in life, I came to understand that my mother had acted according to *her* memetic structure, believing that if I didn't eat the food she provided I wouldn't grow up strong and healthy and, at a deeper level, that I didn't love her because I didn't like her cooking! Perhaps she had inherited these ideas from her own parents or others close to her.

In case after case, clients I have counselled and coached have shared similar stories about events in their lives. The programmed virus may lie dormant for years until it sees an opportunity to come to life. In business, many of us grapple with a negative or self-defeating internal dialogue, such as 'I can't believe how stupid I was to have done this' or 'I'm too scared to spend any money on this in case it goes to shit again'. In such scenarios, a situation doesn't go according to plan or a business decision results in a financial loss or business failure. Another common one many business owners have shared with me is a fear of public speaking that, when investigated, turns out to stem from early implanting of 'Be quiet, shut up' and 'Don't speak until you're spoken to' instructions.

I met a business owner recently who admitted to me it was highly unlikely she would make any money in her first two years in business, as everyone had told her that new businesses don't make any money. Furthermore, her parents didn't take a holiday or a day off during their first seven years in business. So the only way to succeed is to 'work your ass off', because otherwise you are going to fail and be like all the rest of the losers out there!

I want to help you recognise these viruses and begin treatment right there in your mind. By this, I mean beginning the process of removing all the negative memetic beliefs that are planted in there. I warn you, though, that some of them are stubborn little buggers and will take a lot of effort and hard work to extract. Yet without this 'disinfection', the mind remains locked to possibility and alternate interpretations.

UPthinking: spoiling the magic trick

I said earlier that these embedded beliefs have a life of their own. Now, you're effectively trying to 'kill' them, they're not going to go down without a fight, which will present itself as self-doubt, blame justification and/or excuses.

I'm going to share with you what I feel is an excellent way to begin the recognition pattern I call UPthinking (vs. down-thinking). Statistics show that around 3 per cent of people are UPthinkers. These are the business owners who take responsibility for their actions: they plan, look at every situation as an opportunity, are in constant search of openings for self-development and are usually very successful in their endeavours. For the down-thinkers or 'side-to-siders', roughly 97 per cent of people, on the other hand, everything is a drama, everything is someone else's fault; they have no control over their future, have a victim mentality and feel incapacitated by their thoughts. The first step is to recognise this as a mere behaviour. Ask yourself the question, 'What type of thinker am I?' Now I know that may be tough for you, because perhaps you have the memetic replay. 'Yeah, but some people are just lucky', or 'This stuff is not for me — I was born like this'. Well, if you're reading this, congratulations because you are already on the road to recovery!

What is side-to-siders? Thought you'd never ask! These are the business owners who sit on the fence, avoid making decisions or changes; they are procrastinators. Their structure is 'Better the devil you know' or 'Don't risk it'. You know the ones.

Recognition: the first step

Now you're aware of the viruses created by your memetic structure, it's time, as one of Metallica's albums puts it, to 'kill 'them all'! The mind has built up strong resilience, though, so it takes time to break down the ingrained processes of years of conditioning. Using a system that I have learned from Paul Chek is, I believe, one of the most effective ways to begin a strategic but aggressive eradication. And the best thing about this exercise is that it costs about five cents and is highly effective. It's called a *pattern interrupt*.

Recognition is the first step. We need to be able to recognise each memetic replay *before* it happens and then cut it off at the pass. Buy yourself a chunky elastic band and place it around your right or left wrist. Comfy? Now I want you to pull it away from your wrist as far as you can, and yep, that's right, let it go! Try it again. Does it hurt like a son of a bitch? At the moment, the elastic band slapped your wrist, did you think about anything else? I did not think so! Therefore, here is the exercise — it is very simple. Every time you start down- or side-to-side thinking, pull the band and let it go. Keep on doing it until that thought leaves you. Trust me; the best part about this is that it teaches you very effectively to quantify your blames, excuses and justifications — according to the red welt on your wrist! Pay particular attention to the frequency as this will give you some idea on what your internal mental terrain looks like. You will be surprised at the results.

As discussed, most of these thoughts are unconscious and so heavily ingrained that we believe in them absolutely and are literally willing to bet the house on them. This exercise is designed to help us recognise the effect of the virus. A few weeks of pattern interruption can carve out a new habit that recognises the negative thought cycle as it tries to take hold. The subconscious pattern is reflected consciously.

Invisible hurdles: the demons you cannot see

Throughout my coaching career, I have been on a quest to find out why so many business owners, regardless of their position or the stage of their business, have struggled with certain issues they can't

see or don't understand, and, most importantly, don't know how to deal with. What I am alluding to here is what I like to call the *invisible hurdles*. Let me explain. In business, you confront many *visible hurdles*, such as deadlines, stock control, equipment malfunctions, ordering, deliveries, and so on. These are challenges you are usually equipped to deal with through effort, good organisation or sound decision-making. Some of these visible hurdles are pre-empted — say, by preparing for when the tax man cometh at the end of the business financial year. What I have found is that, business owners usually have some type of mechanism to deal with these everyday occurrences.

Then there are the invisible hurdles. These are the hurdles in your mind or your emotions. Typically, they have a large impact on the outcome of your business and determine the levels of everyday stress you experience. These hurdles relate to how you think about a given situation and how long you keep thinking that way. They have been embedded in your mind, as I explained earlier, through a combination of memetic structure and feelings or emotions. Here I'll mention a few areas that are commonly affected in the businesses I have worked with. They have also been invisible hurdles I have uncovered most often in myself. In later chapters, I'll introduce others that are specific to the chapter topic, although some of these invisible hurdles cross over like John Edwards!

Money

The first of these hurdles is money. Money is an interesting concept for the mind as there are so many scenarios to deal with. For instance, there is the 'how I relate to money' scenario. Do you think that money is simply great or do you think it is the root of all evil? Often you have been indoctrinated into this view by a religious belief or a trauma with its roots in money. If a financial transaction failed to produce the desired outcome — perhaps you bought a business or premises that ended up costing you more than you expected — then you have set up a negative response around money. Every time a similar situation arises in your business — for instance, you need to spend money on marketing or education, or to make a substantial purchase — you au-

tomatically revert to that same tune. So you are feeling shaky, anxious, or fearful around money.

You see, the mind replays scenarios that have the same threads even when they don't involve exactly the same types of transactions. Having a bad experience around spending money on a part of your business that carries a certain degree of risk may, by triggering that fear of loss, automatically make you hesitate or procrastinate over a purchase that you should certainly go ahead with. It's important then to ask yourself, 'Is this a similar situation, or is it simply triggered by the same thread of thinking?'

Cash flow

Almost every business has to deal with this issue at one stage or another. An integral part of business, especially for a small to medium enterprise, is the balance between positive cash flow and negative cash flow. Many small businesses check their accounts daily and see the fluctuations as they happen. The invisible hurdle relates to how they interpret and react to the data presented.

In the case of one client of mine a while back, I could tell how her cash flow was going on a daily basis just by the way she was feeling. We had an agreement around accountability that she would text me every day on how she felt that day on a scale of 1–10. Often her response was 7–8. After a month or so, I started see low days of 4–5, so I asked the question, 'Why did you feel like that on those particular low-score days?' To my surprise she answered, 'I look at my bank account in the morning and depending on how the cash flow looks, I know I'm going to have either a good day or a shit day'. It was interesting how directly this invisible hurdle affected her as a business owner. She went on to describe how she would suffer an upset tummy for the day and that the symptoms got worse if the cash balance went down or cured itself if it went up. The constant fluctuation of how she felt created ongoing problems throughout the business.

How do you react to the figures on your bank statement? Can you see how these reactions to money and cash flow can create a chain reaction in your business?

Money is an everyday commodity you use for trading. I mean, you don't trade cows for beans anymore, so you need this paper to represent other commodities, allowing you to do what you need to do — to live, to travel, to do business and so forth. The truth is that these invisible hurdles are there because of your beliefs about reality. Because an event didn't plan out well for you, you imagine this is how things will always turn out in the future. Wouldn't it be better if you looked at the experience as a singular event that was designed for you to learn from? Whether you see it as a victory or failure, the event is valuable in that it can teach you how to navigate in the future. Your business depends on how you react to financial issues each day, each hour, especially as money is a massive part of business.

I believe that *not* having money is the root of all evil and that you can learn from a situation of having little money or low cash flow. I want to share a story with you. A few years back, I was in a business partnership and my business partner decided to leave the business six months after we had started it. This had major financial implications, as the earner of half the income quit although the full debt remained. To cut a long story short, after a year of continued trading on my own, I decided to sell the business. The consequence of this was that I could no longer afford to keep my house and ultimately I went broke. One day after moving into this shitty rental house, I looked at my bank balance and the figures looked worse than the grim reaper. I remember a wave of nausea coming over me, along with all the negative thoughts: 'How hopeless are you, look what you've come to! You're such a loser!'

However, at that moment I felt the urge to fight back. First, I decided to call my brother-in-law. It was one of the toughest decisions I've ever had to make. You see, I come from a proud family. My father would never ask for help. He did it all himself. In the past, I had run several multimillion-dollar business successes, had more than a dozen prop-

erties and had had cash to burn. Here I was, broke and having to ask for help from my family. I felt like I had ‘fallen from grace’. However, I made the call and said, ‘Paul, can you lend me \$500? Because I don’t have the money to put food on the table this week . . .’ then I remember going into the lounge room and speaking to my wife, Rose and to my son. I knelt down to his height and said, ‘This will never happen again. I will never need to borrow money to feed you and the family’. I knew I had drawn a line in the sand and was never going back. The lesson this taught me is that you have the opportunity to learn from adverse experiences, and you have choices in how you react and what you do, then and in the future. I looked at the bank figures and decided I was not going to accept this as my reality from now on.

What the bank statement showed — the truth at that particular moment, the snapshot of where I was — could be interpreted in different ways. I decided there and then that it was up to me what I did with the future.

I uncovered this invisible hurdle and realised that I too was a hostage when it came to money. All the negative thoughts that assailed me stemmed from digits on a computer screen. The hurdle was now visible, so I made a pact with myself that regardless of the situation around money, whether it reflected investment or cash flow, the digits themselves would never again affect me negatively. They would reveal only an indication of what I could do. From that day forward, in difficult situations I asked myself these simple questions:

1. Is this true? Is this situation written in stone without the possibility of change?
2. Is it 100 per cent true? I believe there are only two 100 per cent truths: birth and death. Everything else is less certain. So when I ask this question it becomes obvious that it isn’t necessarily the end at all.
3. What can I do to change this to something more positive? If I don’t subscribe to being hostage to digits on a screen, what can I do? How freeing would this be for me?

The invisible hurdle is the paralysing effect of your interpretation of events. If you continue to react negatively to digits on a screen or page without recognising the ability to change, both your business and your personal life will suffer. It is important to understand that you have a choice over what to do next. It is similar to chess: your opponent makes a move and puts you in a situation, but how you react to this is up to you. Every time this plays out for you from now on, ask the questions suggested above.

For me this was a turning point in my life. Every time I see a bank account with a low balance, I remind myself that this is not permanent, that I can change these circumstances at any time, and that digits will never hold me hostage, as I am in control of them, not the other way around. Most importantly, I deal with these thoughts instantly rather than letting them gain strength and take over not only my mind but also even my body, making me feel low or sick. Now if I have to invest money in marketing or some other parts of my business, I simply increase 'certainty' to the best of my ability through careful planning, looking at return on investment and potential outcome. Once committed I take ownership of my decision, knowing it relates only to this particular situation and that every situation is unique.

Creating certainty

It amazes me how many business owners suffer needlessly over the invisible hurdle of uncertainty, and how most of them suffer in silence with this constant cloud over their heads. If left unchecked, this feeling can cause all sorts of problems, resulting in stress syndromes, fatigue and eventually burnout. I believe that this hurdle results from two sources: under preparation and taking things too personally.

As already mentioned, few things are certain in this world so why should business be any different? If you travel to and from work each day, and the route you usually take is blocked with traffic or road works, you don't blame yourself for the changed conditions. You don't freak out and say this just can't be happening to you; you simply adjust. Your goal is your destination; certainty is increased by planning,

knowing and testing. Regardless of what comes up, you will always have the ability to change tack as long as you are certain of the outcome or destination you set out to achieve. So why is it that you suffer silently over uncertainty?

Most business failures come about when business owners fail to achieve what they set out to achieve simply because they planned poorly, set unrealistic targets or just gave up. If you have performed your due diligence, taken action like an Olympian and understood how to manoeuvre through the territory then you have reduced your uncertainty. If you have experienced what you see as failure, then perhaps you need to ask yourself whether you considered the above suggestions.

The invisible hurdle of uncertainty is one of the worst hurdles to face, because it comes and goes depending on what is going on with the business. For example, I met two builders who worked together in their own construction company. They told me they monitored their business performance according to the amount of money they had in their current account at any given time. If there was money there, they were confident they were doing okay; if not they stressed out. This was when they started panicking, which only made matters worse. Once this hurdle is visible, you know you have a choice on how to react. As I shared earlier, you can decide to stay stuck or to learn. You can never calculate risk with 100 per cent certainty, so if the odds are good and you have done your homework, your confidence (the certainty factor) also goes UP.

The model you choose determines levels of certainty. If you need high certainty, then I suggest you calculate everything out on paper rather than just in your head. Work out how much is enough for you and stick to the game plan: X amount is good; anything under and you're not comfortable; anything over is a bonus. The key to business survival is your ability to be flexible enough to adapt to whatever comes up but to keep your eye on your original goal. Blaming yourself for an unfavourable outcome will still not change the fact that this is the outcome

you've got. Stressing out about it will not change the facts. What will help is analysis — analysis of how you can improve your level of certainty. Over and over again, I see people getting stuck in what one of my good friends and coaches, Kurek Ashley, calls 'drama glue'.

Glue

There are several types of glue that business owners get stuck in. Some are just 'Perkins paste': it is sticky yet you can eat doses of it. (A guy at school used to eat in sandwiches. I am not sure if he is still around!) The invisible hurdle here is that people become conditioned to their environment. If the media print something about the economy, usually business owners justify themselves with reference to that particular event. When the GFC hit there were countless stories of doom and gloom: the world economy was collapsing, there would be bread lines everywhere, and so on. So many business owners who were expanding changed their plans, shrinking their business, cutting back, dropping their prices. If, against their expectations, they nonetheless had a great month of trading, their drama glue changed. Have you had this type of reaction to the drama?

Then there is the 'drama superglue'. This stuff holds the space shuttle together. It is the gaff tape of the business world. The invisible hurdle hides itself in language that begins to mutate into action. Let me give you an example. Have you ever been in a conversation with a business owner in which the worst thing you could have asked was 'How's business?' They hit you for an hour on how bad things are, how bad the economy is, how things aren't what they used to be, how the internet has caused all this, how no one is spending any money . . .

You've heard this shit before, right?

They get so caught up in the 'drama superglue' that they start to believe their own bullshit. They become defensive if anyone argues any different and it gives them great pleasure to wait for just the right moment to join other 'drama superglue' types so they can get sticky together. The effects on the business are devastating. It's like a cancer

that spreads through the company infecting almost everyone in its path until you are completely immobilised and unable to make a decision, because you have become convinced that everyone and everything is out to get you, that you are a victim.

It is essential you have the antidote to free you from the chokehold of victimhood, so here goes:

1. *Plan, plan, plan!* Do not take this lightly. You must use a plan. To map the terrain, one of the best tools to use is a business plan with clear objectives and milestones.
2. *Stop the flow of negative information — immediately.* I mean no doom-and-gloom media of any kind and, most importantly, no conversation with other ‘drama superglue’ users. Simply tell them, ‘Thanks, but I don’t engage in those conversations’. I mean, is that so hard? If someone were showing you images of horrific accidents or child pornography or the like, you would say to them, ‘*Stop right now*’, right? The ‘drama superglue’ is just as nasty for you. Therefore, it is not complicated.
3. *Change your conversation.* Find people who are focused on what they want to achieve, regardless of the environment. In other words, look for people who don’t take no for an answer, who are always looking to better themselves, who don’t care about recessions or booms.
4. *Eliminate words and actions that lead to the ‘glue’.* Stop using words like ‘I can’t’, ‘I don’t know how’, ‘won’t’ and ‘but’. You get the drift. Once you say ‘but’ in a sentence, you are suggesting that you actually do not believe anything that came before it. ‘I love you, *but...*’, ‘I’d love to do it, *but...*’, or ‘Everything is great, *but...*’. Just sit with this for a while and test it out. See how many times you use it and you will be amazed.

Self-doubt: a pattern of thought

In numerous studies on athletes and business entrepreneurs all over the world, time and time again, the difference between the people who

succeed and those who fail lies in their patterns of thought and belief. Now, I do not know about you but I am over hearing about Lance Armstrong and Anthony Robbins. Not to take anything away from these remarkable individuals, but I just prefer to hear about what is happening a little closer to home.

The invisible hurdle is not necessarily the ability of someone to learn how to do certain tasks or read positive affirmations or think positively; it is more about *self-doubt*. Self-doubt has many variants: you can doubt your ability to sell, to grow, to achieve, to fit in with others, to plan, to accomplish daily tasks or, ultimately, to run your business. Behind this invisible hurdle is the idea of *faith*. Business owners often confuse this with understanding their business really well. Often it is not about how good you are in your particular field. It goes beyond your skill set and into the realm of the unseen. As a business owner, you need to have faith in yourself. This may have begun in childhood, with how others viewed and treated you in school. Faith is about self-knowledge. What I mean by this is that when you are certain, you can feel it with every cell in your body, this relentless drive that does not waver, then you have faith in yourself and your ability regardless what others say, and you are willing to bet the house on it. How many times have you failed to make a business decision because of your lack of faith in yourself, even if you know you had the ability to follow through with it?

This invisible hurdle is based on the mental images of ourselves that were recorded in moments when we actually compared ourselves to others, viewed ourselves as losers and believed it, and listened to others commenting or giving advice that was shallow at best. Have you noticed how many people come out of the woodwork to offer you 'constructive criticism' when you are in business? This is often a family member, a friend or another business owner. Sometimes the advice is offered in good faith, but sometimes I feel there is another agenda. Regardless of the intention, lack of understanding about you concerns me. For example, I once knew a business owner whom I had not seen for six months or so. I remember sitting in a coffee shop when he came

in, sat at my table and began the usual small talk. During the conversation, I unwisely shared with him that I was going through a difficult time, with low sales and other problems. Unexpectedly, he hits me with this: 'I know you didn't ask me but I'm going to give you my ten cents' worth anyway.' Without allowing me any time to respond, he proceeded to make me feel like shit by bringing up all the negativity he saw in that particular business situation, and then to analyse me personally. After about 15 minutes of this onslaught, I pulled myself back from buying into his words and, worse still, believing them and slitting my wrists!

I asked myself the following questions:

- How could he possibly know what I was going through if he had not lived in my body?
- How could he make an educated judgement and believe he knew what was best for me?
- What factual context did he base his statements on? What makes him an expert in that field?

These are questions that you can ask yourself every time someone attempts to rock your faith in yourself. As a business owner, faith in yourself and your business is paramount for your success. Winners are distinguished by their unwavering faith in their ability in the field they are in and in themselves as human beings. Cast your mind back to a time when your faith was shaken by an event or another person and look at why you chose to believe this assault on your confidence.

Winners: tap into the source

There is a source of energy inside you- cannot even imagine, a faith that has been and will be a guiding force forever. Let me show you what I mean. If I promised you, \$1 million if you cooked up evidence that would ensure the conviction of a member of your family for a crime that they did not commit. Would you do it? Alternatively, how about if I asked you to change your religious beliefs for X amount of money? More than likely your answer would be an unwavering no, right? Regardless of the money incentive, your certainty or faith in

yourself to make the right decision is unshakable. You see, that guiding energy is in you already, so how could you ever believe otherwise?

It is about constantly checking in with yourself, not letting your defences down and where necessary recovering by asking yourself the right questions, as outlined above. A mentor of mine, Dan Floros, once told me something I have never forgotten. He said, 'Nick, never doubt yourself or lose faith in yourself and always question the world around you, as no one can walk in your shoes'. These words have resonated with me through the years and have been an anchor in times of doubt. Believing in yourself will help you push forward when all the day-to-day obstacles assail you in your business. It gives you the ability to look forward knowing that regardless of present difficulties the lighthouse is always there just over the horizon. It is not a matter of if but of when you see it!

This chapter has been about recognising the invisible hurdles in your thinking and uncovering the roadblocks that stop you from being able to move forward in life and in business. I hope it has helped you to better understand your thought processes, recognise, and give meaning to your experiences. UPology is about mastery and transition. It is about continuing development, constantly gaining experience and knowledge, and applying that knowledge to better yourself and others.

Now I have uncovered the challenges you can see and others you do not, it is time you take the next step. Think of the mind as a paddock that has been planted but denied regular maintenance so it has become overgrown with weeds. Your first task is to distinguish and separate the weeds from the cropping plants. This is what we set out to do in this chapter. The next task is to recondition the soil and seed it with new plants. Finally we need to keep on top of maintenance (and keeping the bugs out!), techniques for which I will share with you in a later chapter.

Chapter 4: Changing your mind

“Significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.”

- Albert Einstein

The next step is reseeding or reprogramming your mind with positive and or useful UPthink patterns. The mind is like a web. You lay down patterns called *neural pathways*, which become thicker every time you associate strong emotions with a particular thought or thought pattern. This said, it also has the ability to renew itself constantly and can lay out unlimited pathways, including empowering ones. Accordingly, you can increase their positive or negative strength. The amazing thing is that these psychological patterns are reflected outwards in many different ways. Here is an exercise:

Grab a sheet of paper and make brief notes on your immediate surroundings: the house you live in, the car you drive, the friends you have, and the job or business you own. Reflecting on the past 10–15 years, observe what changes have occurred. For instance, is your body weight the same? Are you living in the same place? Do you have the same job? Is your situation better or worse? The indicators are clear for someone with a clear, uninfected mind. Millions and millions of people, though, are walking around in what I refer to as ‘brain fog’. For the business owner the symptoms include feeling unclear, being unable to make a decision, getting exhausted easily and thinking every task is equivalent to climbing Mount Everest, as well as suffering headaches and other physical effects. One of the main causes of this very real condition is mental overload, or overpopulation of memetic structures. Diagnosing the problem requires a continuing effort, and a measured outcome therefore requires constant maintenance. Think of it as like taking your car for a regular service: you need a regular mental check-up. Sounds funny? Well, just as failing to nurture your body can result in all sorts of nasty health outcomes, so too can failing to nourish and maintain the mind.

Is your brain red or blue?

Now we are clear, it is time for me to share these two principles by first outlining the difference between a reactionary brain and a proactive brain, and the respective effects on business and personal life. The best way for me to explain this is by dividing the brain into two parts represented by different colours — the red and blue brain.

The *red brain* is its oldest part, responsible for the ‘fight or flight’ response. It is highly reactionary and contains no logical reasoning mechanisms. Think of a time when you were frightened by something. Perhaps you nearly had an accident or were threatened or maybe you faced the need make a major business decision. It feels like you are paralysed; your muscles are tensed up, your jaw tight and you cannot think straight.

Now, in some situations, this level of chemical flooding of two hormones, cortisol and adrenaline, comes in handy, but it obstructs our thinking process. Therefore, in most business situations we end up making poor decisions. Take a minute to reflect on a situation where you instantly started arguing with someone over something insignificant or reacted sharply to a customer or became defensive when offered advice. Can you see, now you have achieved greater clarity that you overreacted? How would you handle the same situation now?

The *blue brain* represents recent evolutionary processes; and is better known as the frontal lobe. This part of the brain is responsible for reasoning, observing, perceiving and making conscious decisions on what to do next — choosing between good and bad, or good and better. This area of the brain makes us more ‘human’. It is through this thinking process that we are able to interact with each other in a calm and rational way (at least most of the time!). We have the ability to train this part of the brain through constantly monitoring the present. ‘Think before you speak’ sums it up perfectly.

As a business owner, it is always important to survey the current environment you are in, rather than reacting hastily. This allows you to make favourable decisions and create impactful outcomes rather than continually producing carnage that you have to deal with. Through my speaking, training and coaching career, I have met many business owners who demonstrate constant reactionary thinking. They rarely take the time to listen to or to sit with their feelings. Instead, they are forever putting out fires, jumping from one spot to another, and find it hard to stay focused on one task to see it through to completion. Often, this is a symptom of the uneasy or 'noisy' mind. Have you ever felt like your head just cannot fit any more in? You have a feeling of mental fog, of detachment, of just wanting to curl up in the foetal position for a while. That is an indicator that you are uncoordinated with your blue brain.

Until not that long ago, we did not have the stressors or the huge amounts of data we have today in our business or personal lives. No wonder we find it hard to stay in the blue brain mindset. A way to recognise whether you are in a red or blue brain state is by focusing on your breathing patterns. The breath is regulated by the state of your body, for example, your levels of adrenaline and cortisol, which in turn affect blood pressure, digestion and sleep. I will speak more about this in chapter 8 on conditioning. External conditions and/or internal thinking can cause our body to become stressed; in turn, our breathing becomes shallower and increases in speed. We become breathless and start to pant. It is important to observe or check in from time to time during the business day to see whether your breath feels shallow and faster than usual.

Another symptom of being out of equilibrium or *homoeostasis* is pain in the jaw area, which often comes from grinding or clenching the teeth, another symptom of an uneasy mind. Remember, the blue brain is the part of the brain that produces calm, rational thinking; it makes us ponder who and what we are. Here is a great exercise to help you stay in what I call the blue brain state longer.

Step 1: At night, just before bed, lie on the floor with a rolled-up towel under your spine lengthways (from head to toe).

Step 2: Place your right hand over your belly button so you can feel your hand rise and fall with your breath.

Step 3: Place your left hand near your heart so you can feel its rhythm.

Step 4: With eyes closed, simply allow yourself to relax for five minutes. Tune in to the beating of your heart. Become aware of the gentle rise and fall of your hand, and listen to the sound of your breath as you breathe in and out.

The goal here is to ‘sit with your breath for five minutes’. If you lose concentration, do not worry. It is normal. Through practice, you will spend more time *in tune*. This exercise is designed to slow you down mentally and physically and get you back into the blue brain zone, shifting your focus away from the everyday stress. Once you feel comfortable with five minutes, see if you can increase it to around 20 minutes twice a day: in the morning before work, and again in the evening before sleeping. You will be amazed by the power of this exercise and the effects it can have on your business. Being aware of your thoughts allows you to make decisions positively rather than reactively. It can also be ‘practised’ at work, and you will need practice to get better at it. Try it every day for a month.

In the zone: to infinity and beyond

The mind has the ability to make manifest whatever we want it to. Think of it as like a magic wand — do not use it to bash nails in with. It operates much better when you know how to use it. Now you know what to look for and something of how the mind works and how it is programmed, it is time to get moving towards attaining a *zone state* or mental resilience. The *zone* is where we experience an optimal state of flow or being. This is what artists, musicians, athletes and ultra-successful business owners mean when they say they are ‘in the zone’. Have you ever had the experience when doing something, whether it is in your business, fixing a blocked pipe or speaking to a room full of people, where you are so focused it feels at that moment like there’s no one else in the room? It is as though time slows down, everything

becomes quiet, and you are completely present and ‘in the moment’. In this state, the conscious and subconscious parts of the brain come together.

Think of it like opening the floodgates to creativity and clarity, a state in which conscious thinking is no longer required- The essence of our capacity to apply our mind to anything we desire, and feel truly engaged with. It is not that we will be constantly in this state and will no longer need to work at it. It is about attaining this state as a testament to our evolution and a measure of our effort and focus.

I believe the zone can be achieved only through mastery and constant practice. Today, many business owners want to get rich in their PJs and never put in the effort and focus required to achieve control of their mind. If you are that type of person, then probably this book is not for you; if, however, a practical, effective methodology is what you are seeking, then hold on — it is coming. To achieve regular zone states, you need a process or system that when practised regularly strengthens the neural pathways to the point where interaction with whatever you are doing becomes effortless. My goal is to help you discover that through practice and application you can define your ‘enlightened mindset’. Think of it like this:

Do you remember when you started your first job? In the beginning, you were a little clunky around the processes, and what you were supposed to do, but after some time in the job, you found things began to become easier and required a lot less effort. This is because you had actually started to take on board the skill and the thinking process needed to make the task simpler. In this situation, you actually take on a different skill set and mindset. The actions you take are different, how you see yourself is different and how you fit into your surroundings is different — you *evolve*. In the same way, when you practise for the zone you start to evolve. Your thinking advances to a different level. A new mindset starts to operate. You no longer associate yourself with down- or side-to-side thinking. You start literally to think differently, to practise and develop *unconscious competence*.

UP and away: the path to unconscious competence

Unconscious competence is the attainment of a state I call 'no-think' in which you and your skill are so attuned that they become one, and conscious thought is suspended. Think of it as being in flow seamlessly and effortlessly.

This state can be achieved more often through constant practice — practice of skill, performance, thought process and mindfulness. Unconscious competence is not achieved through a simple decision you have conscious control over. It is a state of harmony between oneself and one's environment. Spiritual guru Wayne Dyer elegantly explains it as 'being inspired or being in-spirit'.

I like to work things out by reverse engineering. So if the above states are the final frontier, how do I work back from there to what I need to do or not do in order to achieve them? As an entrepreneur, you should always demand more from yourself and your efforts than you previously thought possible. Constant improvement has always been my ambition, an extension of my 'magnificent obsession'. It is also my goal to help you embark on the same quest for yourself in your personal and professional realities.

Start with the end in mind. If you are a busy business owner, more than likely you never seem to have enough time to devote to yourself, let alone to the practice of attaining new levels of 'unconscious competence'. So my first advice is that you decide whether this resonates with you or not. If it does, you are already halfway there. Most people think it takes a long time to make a decision. In fact, it takes a millisecond; the indecision process takes the longer time.

For example, if you are a smoker, how many times have you said you are going to give up? Or you may know someone in the same boat. The decision to give up is not the hard part; it is the lack of *conditioning* that is the problem. You can make a decision in no time; you just need the 'will' and the 'want' to start the journey.

Now you have made the decision to try it, I suggest you begin the process by setting aside around 10 minutes a day to start with, which you can increase as you build your mental strength. Keep a journal to note your progress; that way you have a tangible timeline and record of your efforts. It constantly surprises me how many business owners never record their figures, as though they are scared they might catch a plague by doing so. One of the keys to attaining a higher level of unconscious competence is to develop what I refer to as *mental calm*. This requires that you practise the ability to block out the noise mentally, and the constant internal negative chatter that goes on around you. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, this is especially evident in business owners operating in a red brain state. In business, it is extremely important to be able to evaluate the situation at any given point. To know how mentally calm you are, you need to know how much noise you are currently experiencing. Write down where you are now versus where you want to be. In business, this is called a GAP assessment. It gives you a perspective, an educated observation and room for analysis. This way you can measure the steps along the way and make adjustments if needed.

You need to listen not only to the internal conversation but also to the external conversation. Your words reflect what is going on internally; they are manifestations of what is in your mind. Here are some great exercises I use with my one-on-one business-coaching clients to get them to own their words and mindsets.

Step 1: Begin by writing down the negatives in your life — things like ‘I am not good at . . .’, ‘I get angry when . . .’, ‘How could you do this to me...’ or ‘Look what you made me do . . .’ Get it all down on paper so we can see how many of these parasites are in there.

Step 2: Once you have them down, sit with them for a while and just see what comes UP for you. As I spoke about earlier, taking stock of the present moment is important as it can reveal many answers to the challenges you face.

Step 3: Continue this exercise for a week or until you have exhausted all the negative or down-thinking patterns of words in your mind.

For tech-savvy people who like gadgets and gizmos (I'm one of them).

Here is another great technique.

Record your daily conversations and interactions using a pocket audio recorder or, even easier now, your mobile device. However, please note, it is imperative that you inform people you are recording the conversation. Tell them you are doing an experiment on what language patterns you use. Ask if it's okay with them if you record it, and promise that once you have listened to it you'll delete it. Most people are okay with that but see how you go. I have used the approach many times effectively. The key is to be able to analyse your conversation to look for any 'below the line' patterns or language that you are more than likely not even aware of.

The importance here is how you react in these situations: is it with a 'fight or flight' (red brain) response or a calm (blue brain) response?

Step 1: Place recorder in your top pocket or you may want to purchase a lapel mike.

Step 2: Begin by recording yourself in conversation for an hour and then two hours at a time.

Step 3: Extend the time and the number of days.

Step 4: Review the recordings to see how you weigh up. Remember, the words we speak usually indicate who we are and point to the actions we take. The best part is that the recordings paint a picture of where our mindset is at that given point in time. See if you can record yourself in different environments — for example, at work, at home, at a party or arriving home after a challenging day. This will provide a snapshot of how you behave in different settings. By now, you should have a good idea of your degree of 'mental calm'.

Step 5: Score yourself on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being that you are 90per cent free of these destructive thoughts and 1 being that you still have a high level of 'noise' or internal negative clutter.

Step 6: Continue these exercises until you start to see, and record, that you are becoming calmer, more in tune with your environment, less

reactionary and more focused. The beauty of this technique is that through recording yourself you can very easily measure your progress.

Never say never; switching on the unbelievable

UPology, as I shared at the beginning of this book, involves the continuing evolution of the body, the mind and the spirit. Now I want to throw something out there for a moment — try it on for size. You don't have to agree with it. I just want you to consider it and ask the question.

Can you imagine what your life would be like if you were able to make a choice of whether to believe in your current 'self' or make an active choice to detach from this state of indoctrination and choose to allow your mind to uncover its limitless potential? We are convinced that the physical body regulates the brain and the mind. In other words, if the body is affected, let us say through alcohol or drug dependency, the mind suffers as a result. However, how about if, regardless of the situation, you could make a choice- You could choose to supersede the limitations of the physical and elevate your thought process to the upper consciousness— the part of the mind that is not limited or restrained by belief or conditioning. We have the ability that allows the conscious mind to be trained to cross the threshold from consciousness to upper consciousness. An example of this crossover is the dream state, where the conscious mind is switched to standby mode like your computer and upper consciousness takes over, allowing us to experience a world we could never conceive through conscious thought processes. The mind is so powerful that the body cannot tell the difference between reality and non-reality. The idea I want to convey is not the power of dream but the ability of the mind to help us perform extraordinary feats.

Upper consciousness is not a new concept. Highly trained and disciplined individuals such as athletes, monks and jet fighter pilots have frequently demonstrated it. It has also been witnessed in incredible acts of bravery, writing of genius and savant-like performance. Here is

an example of the connection between the power of upper conscious thought and the physical body, when the power of the upper consciousness overrode the body's limitations.

Mountain climber Beck Weathers was left for dead on Mount Everest in 1996. (One out of 15 climbers doesn't return from this mountain.) After two days spent lying face-down in the snow showing no sign of life, with Climbers tramping past him — 'He's dead, let's keep moving,' he heard them say — he decided he wanted to live. He recalls the final moments before the miracle happened. He says he saw an image of his family and said to himself I must live and see them again. Throughout the two days, he explains, his mind had been functioning at a 'super state' of awareness even though his body was completely shut down. In that instant, his mind, in some mysterious way and for reasons unknown, rerouted the last traces of energy to begin reversing the hypothermia and activating the frontal lobes (blue brain) responsible for willpower. Amazingly, Beck was able to turn thought into action, saving his life.

(Check this video out on TED Talk:

www.ted.com/talks/ken_kamler_medical_miracle_on_everest.html)

This story demonstrates our ability to tap into our upper conscious mind and create extraordinary outcomes. Now, I am not saying that we need to go to such extremes to test the theory. What I am saying is we have potential far beyond the restraints of what we believe.

Here is another example. Some incredibly unusual individuals, known as savants, possess the ability to tap into the gift of the mind and perform feats that we can scarcely imagine. For example, Steven Wiltshire, from London, is autistic and finds normal social communication difficult. He did not speak until he was seven and still found it hard to hold a conversation. His gift is his photographic memory. At age 11, he drew the cityscape of London after a single helicopter ride. It was drawn perfectly to scale and with the detail of a photograph.

The point I am making here is that perhaps through a greater scientific understanding of what is going on in our brain we may be able to practise and train the mind to accomplish amazing things. I believe we all have these innate powers, and that some earlier civilisations may have developed an understanding of the power of the mind. Maybe it is just that we have forgotten how to use our mind's full potential. I invite you to see where you can take this concept and how you can apply it to your own mind, not only in times of crisis but also in everyday life and business settings.

Building mental resilience

Now you have done the weeding, it is time for the seeding. By seeding, I mean building strong neural pathways and creating mental resilience, both essential as you begin your journey towards mastery. Any successful business became successful over a period of time. In accomplishing great and some not so great feats, its directors have conditioned themselves for mental resilience. Mental resilience determines the speed it takes you to recover after a setback. For instance, let us say you were pitching a proposal to a client that you thought would suit them perfectly. After the presentation, their response was in the negative- not what you expected, but it is at this point you are able to gauge your mental resilience. You must choose whether (a) to take the outcome on board personally, hang your head and begin the whole blame game or (b) to refuse to attach yourself to the outcome, to brush it off and say to yourself, 'I tried my best so I'll just keep going'.

Mental resilience is about the bounce-back effect of your thought processes, about how you react at this point. Athletes require high levels of mental resilience. Their ability to bounce back or to 'get back on the horse' is generally far stronger than the average person's. In business, you have no doubt come across this many a time. So ask yourself:

- How do I bounce back after a tough situation? Do I dwell on the negative for too long?

Some years back, I remember coaching a client. Our session was in the afternoon in my office. When he got to the session, I could see he was flustered so I asked him what was wrong. To my amazement, he said angrily, 'I couldn't believe this dickhead this morning cut me off in the traffic, so I chased him but he got away'. I asked him, 'You said this happened at 6.30 this morning, on your way to work?' 'It did!' he replied. 'It's 5.30 now — why are you still even thinking about this?' This client clearly exhibited a low level of mental resilience and a poor bounce-back rate. All day he had been consumed by an incident that shouldn't have taken up any mental space. No one was injured, no one's life was threatened; it was a simple mistake that almost everyone I know who drives a car has committed at some stage.

Building mental resilience in business promotes quick recovery and positive action. Time to recovery is critical and can be measured. One approach I like to use is that, regardless of the situation, I do not put a major emphasis on the outcome or end result. Often business owners set their happiness according to outcomes: with a great result, I am happy, not so great and I am grumpy all day. I understand that some of you will be thinking how it could not be about the outcome. I want to clear the air. Your goal is to make things happen but the outcome is just one factor. Business is not like gambling, with a win or loss determining the game. The business game is about an accumulated series of wins or loses that add up to the experience you gain. Therefore, the key element in mental resilience is what you do with the outcome. You can choose door A (let it consume you) or door B (learn from it, adjust your delivery and try again).

So in order to create solid mental resilience you need to begin the path of reseeded. This is where the training begins. I have devised an equation that can help you in training.

Clear Strategic Planning + Daily Practice + Constant Evaluation = Mental Resilience

- 1. Clear strategic planning:** Have a goal in mind using the SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) formula.
Example: 'I want to achieve a good level of mental resilience by . . . [date]. How will you plan and break your goal down into a usable structure? *Example:* 'I will start by [. . .] and then begin to practice [. . .] times per week for a length of [. . .] I will measure my progress by recording it in my daily accountability chart and continue the plan until I reach my goal.
- 2. Daily practice:** Practising daily is the only way, and it is important to record the scores on a template. Send me an email at info@UPologybook.com and I will be happy to send you a daily accountability chart that you can use to record your daily achievements.
- 3. Constant evaluation:** Set milestones for constant evaluation.
Example: Every week you can check on how you are travelling by looking at your log of daily activities, cross-referencing your reactions and the written and recorded exercises.

UPTake: good input, great output

Now you have the formula, it is all about the material to restrengthen the neural pathways we spoke of earlier in the chapter. Here are several avenues for you to consider. I like to call it UPTake! This is about UPTaking positive, useful data that can be implemented, and stored using different learning modalities:

- 1. Written:** It is important that you begin the process of reading and writing words, phrases, affirmations and so on that create a positive outcome on your mental attitude and impact your physiology positively as well. For example, here's a little exercise on the power of words:

'I am sorry to inform you that all your assets have been frozen, you owe the tax department \$250,000 and the bank has just instructed us to take over your home. You have 24 hours to vacate your premises.'

I want you to stand as you would if you had just read this advice. Now look at yourself. More than likely, your head is down or in your hands, your shoulders are forward and you are feeling a gut-wrenching anxiety that you would not wish on your worst enemy, right?

Let us try another exercise:

‘I am excited to inform you that you have been recognised for all the great work that you have done in your community over the past 12 months. As a token of appreciation, we are happy to give you this \$10,000 cheque to help you to continue developing your program. We would also like you to join us as a guest in our corporate box at the world cup final, where you will meet celebrities and athletes.’

Now how is your physiology?

You see the words you read, write and speak all produce a physical response. This is why it’s important that they include things that are empowering, helping you to cultivate positive thought patterns. Be aware of the conversations you are having. Ask yourself, ‘Is the topic of this conversation in line with my mindset? Is it making me feel Uplifted or is it dragging me down?’

There are books you can read on positive mental attitude, psychology and how the brain works. Among those I feel are a must-read when building your mental resilience are:

- *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill
- *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey
- *The E-Myth* by Michael Gerber
- *Psycho Cybernetics* by Maxwell Maltz.

2. Audio: You can find some amazing audio books. The reason I like this medium is it is great from a time management point of view. You can throw on a CD or MP3 in the car, while you are going for a walk or as you work in the garden — and kill two

birds with one stone, so to speak. The other benefit is you can play it repeatedly until its message sinks in.

3. **Visual:** This is an awesome way to train the mind. From YouTube clips to DVDs, today the possibilities are limitless. Another great tool is vision boarding, which you can do online now using free software, where you create an animated vision or dream board. I also like to draw mandalas; think of these as creative drawings without boundaries. They help the mind express itself. They also have energetic traits that help you on other levels.
4. **Kinaesthetic:** Being physically creative — for example, I like to use Plasticine — expands our right-brain function, which has a positive influence on both business and pleasure. Creating something that is a little challenging can help you develop ‘out of the box’ thinking and problem solving that can be usefully applied in your business. It also helps cut down the time spent searching for the words to use in conversation or written communications.

The mind is a complex organ, to say the least. It has infinite capabilities, including the potential to restructure itself, to draw on new information, to change the world. At the same time, it also has the capacity to keep you locked in what I call the ‘mind cells’. This is where our thoughts can keep us hostage for long periods. The key to a successful mindset is in how you maintain it, program it, condition it and explore it. Using the above tools and principles will help you begin this journey of exploration.

This chapter on the human mindset has set out to help you understand what is going on in your mind and how to cope with and influence it. This is only the beginning of the UPology process. However, it lays the foundation for the path ahead. Many business owners I have met think well, and they are switched on. They are great communicators and are intellectually brilliant, yet they feel lost, finding themselves going

around in circles, making the same mistakes, dealing with the same negative stuff. It feels like they are on a treadmill. You may feel this way yourself— that feeling of ground hog day, of uncertainty about what to do next. I believe the main reason for this is the lack of a game plan or strategy, which is the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Strategy: creating a road map

“Change is not a destination, just as hope is not a strategy.”

- Rudy Giuliani

Strategy is the force behind the mindset. The tool that brings your thought processes to life. I call it an *energy converter*. It converts thought into reality. This is why strategy is so important to you. With strategy, you can see your dreams manifest in front of you. This is an incredible way to measure your successes and learning. Thought without strategy is restricted to the space between your ears. Thought has a life that it needs to live as well, as I shared with you earlier when discussing memetic structures. A thought is powerful but it needs strategy to fulfil itself. Here is an example.

Have you ever had a burning desire to call someone but found your mobile phone battery is flat? Yet, your need feels overwhelming. The reason for this is that the thought is waiting for the component that makes it come to life, the *doing* part — strategy. A sequence of events needs to take place in a particular order and needs all the components to make it happen. The strategy around that particular thought is: (1) charge phone, (2) enter number (3) speak. Leave out one component and it is not going to happen.

One of the biggest challenges I face when I coach business owners is that they lack a strategy or strategic planning not only in their business but also in their own life. What I am going to share with you next is the second UPology principle-strategy: and how to use it optimally to bring your thought processes to fruition. Think of it as like an engine in a car — engine and car body need each other to come to life; they complement each other perfectly!

This chapter brings together the key elements of strategy and offers you a road map and clear direction for your business, backed by a solid plan of attack and timeline. I will introduce you to some of the

platforms that have worked for me, which you can apply and/or modify according to your business and personal needs.

Guess mode is a recipe for failure

The opportunity to work with many business owners in my coaching programs has provided me with interesting insights into what is really going on in individual businesses. It has allowed me to see what is happening behind the scenes, so to speak, or indeed, what is *not* happening. Time and time again, I come across businesses, regardless of size or financial position that lack any form of strategic planning. In most cases, the business owners or operators are in guess mode 99 per cent of the time; that is; they are taking it day by day, just making it up as they go along. Now, I do not know about you but to me this is a sure recipe for disaster- whether through going broke or suffering a heart attack from the stress.

Interestingly, when I have asked the question, ‘Why don’t you have a strategy?’ Most reply, ‘I didn’t think it was important’ or ‘it’s all in my head’. Those answers have led me to draw the following conclusions:

- A. They do not realise the importance of strategy.
- B. They do not know how to put together a clear strategy.
- C. They enjoy the ‘guess mode’ confusion of making it up as they go.

I always hope the explanation is not C.

I cannot emphasise enough the importance of having a thought-out strategy for both your business and your personal life. Think of it like this. Would you ever build a house without a set of plans? Some might choose to wing it, but the result is likely to be disastrous.

What strategy gives you is an overall map of the terrain; it tells you when and where to set course and what direction to take. Moreover, it can be measured through analytical data, such as sales figures, client data lists, financial figures, positioning reports and much more. Knowing this information allows you to adjust course as needed. It also

gives you a heads-up on what is coming UP. One of the main reasons business owners fail to capitalise on opportunities is that they have no or poor strategic plans. Most of the time, the boat has sailed before they were even aware it was there!

There are varied reasons behind why so many business owners fail to develop a strategy or plan for their business. I want to share with you some of the factors I have covered with my coaching and or workshop clientele.

With a strategic plan, you build the business you want

According to Michael Gerber, in his famous book, *The E-Myth*, the widespread failure of businesses to 'buy in' to developing a strategy or plan stems from the fact that 90 per cent of business owners start out with what he calls the 'practitioner or the mechanic' mindset. What he is saying is that business owners with a practitioner mindset think only of how to work *in* the business rather than *on* it. What this means is that having spent 95 per cent of the business day selling widgets or serving others, they can find, on average, only 30 minutes a week for their books, networking, forward planning and so on. These business operators see planning or designing a strategy as a misuse of time and so avoid the task like the plague.

Time and time again, I come across business owners who believe that only by working hard, doing the same stuff will they eventually 'make it'. This also illustrates the *fixed mindset* — that is, the inability to be flexible to the possibility of developing a strategy and game plan. Often spending more time thinking about the best way to operate your business, rather than being wrapped up in the everyday tasks, would lift you to a better place. Einstein was once asked, 'If a comet was due to hit Earth in 24 hours' time, what would you do?' He replied, 'I would spend 23 hours working on a strategy and one hour implementing that strategy'. In other words, the clearer you are about your business, the challenges ahead and where you want to be in the future, the better for you, your business, your family and all concerned.

Strategy is the framework of any business. Once you have the framework, you can build the whole structure. You also have the ability to design the 'avatar' you want. By this, I mean the business strategy that will give you the type of business that ideally suits your lifestyle and needs. Yes, you get to choose what you want to achieve. For example, if you want your business hours to be limited to between the 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., design those hours into the strategy. If you want your business to grow by 10 per cent every quarter for the first 12 months, then factor that into the design. I believe that almost anything is possible if you can design it in your mind first, write it down, make the necessary calculations and explain it to others.

The status quo would suggest you have to work like a slave, with no time off in the first five to ten years of your business, and that when you have adhered to those rules you just might earn the privilege of taking a week off between Christmas and New Year's, if you're lucky. This actually sounds to me like the 'fixed mindset' at work. Strategy allows for foresight, planning, testing timelines and, importantly, self-designs. You have the power to design what you want, when you want it. In the first session I have with my one-on-one mentoring clients I ask them when they are going to take holidays, how long for and how much it is going to cost. Why would I ask this in the first session? Well, isn't it fun to look forward to going on holiday? The strategy here is to begin the process of life/work balance. I set this way up my strategy and the people who work with me. Your business should work for you, not the other way around. Life first, then business! I will return to this a little later.

More than likely you will be familiar with the Nike advertising slogan 'Just do it'. The thought of 'just doing' a business strategy or plan feels overwhelming for most business owners, who struggle with all sorts of questions like 'How do I do it?', 'Where do I start?' and 'How do I get my head around it?' However, it's not that complicated.

I remember speaking to a thought leader friend of mind, Peter Cook, who gave me an easy explanation of why people do not 'just do it'.

Even though they know that, whatever task it is they are setting themselves to do can be of short- or long-term benefit, consciously or subconsciously they find every excuse in the book to avoid doing it. Therefore, here is my interpretation.

As modern-day humans (of, say, the last 1000 years or so) we are still using the human model that was created around the 50,000 years ago. Think of it like different product models. We were designed to deal with certain environmental conditions that applied back then. If, for example, a tiger happened to walk into the cave you were hanging out in, your body model was designed for a 'fight or flight' response — you would try to defend yourself or to escape. These strategic options were pre-set in our genetic makeup to deal with that threat. The other side of the coin was around conserving energy. It was important to do very little other than hunt and keep watching in case it comes, Mr Lion or Mr Bear, right. In times of low threat, you mostly just hung out. Conserving energy in today's business world means procrastination or not taking action. In earlier times, it was not hip to go out for a run, do a weight session then come back to the cave. You just did not really do what you did not need to. Most humans rarely travelled more than 50 kilometres from their tribe throughout their life. It was dangerous to do so and wasting that much energy simply on travelling could have dire effects on your life.

What I am suggesting here is that working out a strategy and then implementing an action plan are not things that come naturally to us. However, that has not to say they can't be learned and implemented. *They can!* Therefore, you can only use the 'I'm genetically not engineered for it' excuse for so long. Why? We are creatures that adapt to overcome obstacles. The reason I wanted to share this with you is to convey why some business owners have a hard time creating or implementing a strategic plan.

Tasks become easier for us once they have been implemented a few times, and we see their benefits. The key is to know your strengths and recognise when you need to get educated on the subject or to del-

delegate it to someone who can do it better and more efficiently. I will be returning to delegating and off shoring a little later. After looking at the possible reasons why some things do not come, as easily to us as others, it is important to understand the mental and emotional invisible hurdles that impede our success.

The ‘perfect plan’ and other common hurdles

Here I want to return to the problem of invisible hurdles, introduced in chapter 3, and share with you the hurdles for each of the four pillars; *mindset*, *strategy*, *mastery* and *evolution*. Remember, it is the hurdles that you cannot see or that you have not dealt with that are most detrimental to you and your business. Another good reason for having a strategy is that in the planning phase you have the opportunity to bring some important hurdles to the surface and begin the process of dealing with them.

Often in business, it is hard to see over the horizon when you are caught up in the present. However, it is important that you look UP, take stock of where you are and adjust your course accordingly. If you do not, you can get yourself into a situation that is hard to get back out of (forgetting to do your taxes, for instance!). An invisible hurdle I commonly come across, especially among SMEs (small to medium enterprises) is, ‘I know what I need to do — it’s all in my head’. I believe this comes from a lack of formal business education and/or procedures. Such businesses are usually operated in ‘seat of the pants’ style or with the Aussie ‘She’ll be right, mate’ attitude. But what if something happens to the business owner when all the plans, accounts and day-to-day operations are in his head alone? What becomes of the business then? The problem is that the majority of business owners who think this way fail to see the ramifications of having everything stored in their head rather than on paper. Think of it like life insurance. When something unexpected happens, it can be too late to do anything about it. Having everything stored in your head without any written record or planning can leave you holding the bag. (By the way, if you’re reading this and you don’t have life insurance, stop now, go,

and get it. Don't think only of yourself; think of the other people in your life, such as your family.)

So how do you get around this invisible hurdle? One of the things I cover with my clients is the importance of 'downloading'. By this I mean taking everything that has to do with your business, especially your intellectual property, writing it down in a structured way and storing it somewhere safe. At some stage, you need to draw on your values, such as *attention to detail*, *family*, *diligence* and so on, because prioritising these values will also help ensure that you rate strategy as a necessity rather than a hindrance.

Other invisible hurdles here are 'It's way too hard to put it all down on paper' and 'I know how to do it, though. I just can't explain it'. In my view, if you cannot explain your business (or anything else) to someone clearly, and if you do not have the ability to demonstrate it on paper, then you do not really know it. This is one of those hurdles that have are rooted in the 'practitioner' mindset- the 'if I want a job done I'll do it myself' mentality. Regardless of the size of the business, it is essential that you have a game plan that you can show to anyone at any time. Why is this important? It is not about showing your strategy to others, it is about demonstrating that you have taken the time to look at your strategy from a different perspective. You see, once you put it down on paper it takes on a life of its own. It grows, is added to, is open to input from others and can be adjusted accordingly.

As we covered in the previous chapter, our mind can be deceiving. This leads us to the 'perfect planning' invisible hurdle. Let me tell you what I mean. Have you ever made plans you thought were fail-proof, only to see them undone because you forgot one small detail? Often, the small things have the biggest impact. Moreover, it isn't helped by the mind's ability to make things seem either rosier or far worse than they are. This invisible hurdle is demonstrated in various scenarios. For example, you have come up with a new business idea, and in your mind, you have already chosen the colour of your Lear jet and the villa in Tuscany. Once you begin to speak to others, or do some research,

however, the gloss soon starts to wear off. I have come across many business owners, and for that matter include myself among them, who could have bet their house on their 'perfect plan' being flawless, only to find out their mistake the hard way, after spending a truckload of cash on the back end or damage control.

I remember opening a business where I had everything planned to perfection in my head; including all the figures that I needed to get the venture going. I went one-step further by adding what I thought would be the initial start-up cost on a spreadsheet. Unfortunately, in the end the initial setup cost was two and a half times more than the perfect plan in my head. I had failed to develop a clear strategy that could be looked at from another perspective, importantly by professional entrepreneurs who build companies for a living.

Once again, it is better to have your strategy critiqued and pulled to pieces on paper than settling for the perfect plan in your head. This invisible hurdle is a bunker buster. Do not revert to the 'I've never had to do it before' mindset. If you have not done it because you've never done it, we'll start now. I am going to give you the tools you need to get the ball rolling. Remember in the introduction, I said that the road to business and personal success is about expanding your mind to possibility, learning how to do things that are not always easy. This is one of those tasks, but trusts me, once you get the hang of it you are on your way!

Strategic intent: the flexible business plan

I am often I asked, 'When should I start the strategy component of the business?' My answer is, 'You should have already started'. It is dangerous operating a business without some type of guide that you can refer to on a regular basis to track your progress or alter the path. Another common question is, 'I'm already running the business, so do I really need a strategy?' I like to think of it like this. The only certainties in life are that you are born and eventually you will die. Everything in between is in flux. Business can change rapidly in a short time.

So why develop a strategy in the first place if things are changing? Here is the reason. In today's business, the traditional strategy of having a fixed or static business plan is obsolete. Gone are the days of fixed five-to ten-year plans. In today's market, it is much more feasible to have an adaptive or 'fluid' business plan. The academic terminology is *strategic intent* — for example, a 12- to 24-month business strategy that also includes elements of a business plan that is reviewed every quarter, measured and adjusted regularly. The idea is to identify what you intend to accomplish within a given timeline while remaining flexible enough to adapt to any visible or invisible hurdles you encounter along the way.

Ideally, then, it makes sense to begin designing your business strategy before starting a new venture. If you are an established business, though, then I suggest you take some time out to begin the process without further delay. Regardless of where you are in your business, or the size of the business you operate, it is imperative that you have a strategy.

Back to basics: take stock

When you join the military, one of the first tests they do is to find out what you know and what you do not know. That way they can gauge what they have to teach you and assess your strengths and weaknesses, rather like a SWOT analysis in business. For those of you who are not familiar with SWOT analysis, it stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, and is used in situations such as marketing or business planning, which we will cover shortly. In a similar way, it is a good idea to take stock of what you know about building a strategy for your business. This way you have the ability to work with your strengths and research or outsource what you do not know or do not have the ability to do.

Your SWOT analysis results will help you to build an overall picture of where your business is currently and where you hope it will be. A GAP analysis answers the following questions:

- A. Where are you now?
- B. Where do you want to be?
- C. What do you need to get there?

It will usually incorporate all facets of the business, ranging from sales, marketing and operations through to finances and so on. It is also like a snapshot of where the business is positioned on a linear timeline. It is a real-time reference point. In addition, it shows you what you have in place as a business owner. For a copy of a sample GAP assessment, simply email info@UPologybook.com and in the subject heading type in GAP Assessment. I will be more than happy to send you this as a gift!

Now you have done your SWOT analysis and have an understanding of where your business is at through completing a GAP assessment, it is important to interpret the data. Business owners often ask me, 'What do I do next?' The answer is, *do something*. Data on a page is just that if you do not take any action. I want you to take a mental note of this: if you do not take action within 24 hours of interpreting the data, then the odds are against you doing anything. In other words, the longer you leave it, the more likely you will leave it forever! This is called the 'law of diminishing intent'.

Most business owners I work with experience an adverse reaction similar to eating shellfish or peanut butter. The effects start appearing pretty much immediately — the dryness of the mouth, the swelling of the eyes and the overall feeling of being out of control . . . well, maybe not exactly like this, but what does happen is that they become 'paralysed' on some level and feel they have no control over what happens next. The GAP assessment gives you an indicator of what is really going on within the business, which is usually identified by the assessment result.

Common responses are:

- A. I did not realise how many elements made up the business.
- B. I cannot believe how many things I have not thought through.
- C. I have no idea what to do next.

Such responses tend to reflect shock or disbelief, which can be paralyzing. Now, do you remember what I shared with you in the opening chapter about UPology being about choice? This is one of those stages in your business when you need to make a choice on what to do with the data you have. You can, for example:

- A. become a victim — by doing nothing with the data and carrying on with business as usual, acting as if you never completed the assessment and keeping your head in the sand.
- B. become the victor — by viewing the data as a starting point, accepting that this is where you are at this stage of your business and making the choice to move forward, taking the red pill (as Morpheus says to Neo in *The Matrix*, ‘Let me show you how deep the rabbit hole really goes’).

I hope you choose B. Rather than freaking out about the assessment; I want you to learn from it, and begin the process of working on achieving a better result. The beautiful part about any assessment is exactly that. It is an assessment that you can reassess, measuring your progress, interpreting the data, adjusting the parameters. In other words, you have the ability to achieve a different outcome.

The assessments I have indicated below are simply about what I like to refer to as *taking stock*. Effectively, this is the pre-strategy stage or the starting point. The next step is beginning the strategic planning process.

I have to say I do not really like reinventing the wheel (I’ll return to this). If it’s been done before, and someone has tested and refined it, great. It’s about leveraging your time, money and manpower. I’m talking about a model — that is, a strategy that has been developed before in a similar business field. For example, if you are in the restaurant

game then it makes sense that you look at model strategies of other successful restaurants. They don't have to be in the same suburb, state or even country for that matter. Alternatively, let us say that you are an e-tailer in shoes or fashion accessories. A model you might want to consider is Zappos, a pioneer in this field with an amazing model. So what strategy have these companies implemented that have helped them get where they are, and what can you learn and assimilate into your business strategy? Some of you are thinking, 'How would I ever be able to ask a company like Zappos or someone successful in my field for their strategy? I'm their competitor. I don't even know them', and so on . . .

The answer is, just ask. What's the worst answer they can give you? 'No' or 'I can't help you'? You can live with that. Interestingly, however, business entrepreneurs at this level are often more than happy to share their ideas with others. They also understand that it takes more than strategy and that their business is unique, just as yours is. So put yourself out there and begin connecting with others in the field; you are actually like them, just at a different stage.

Also, look outside your field of expertise for a strategy you might apply. For example, if your business is growing, you are shipping items all over the country and you are looking at the most cost-effective and systemised way to pick, pack and deliver orders, then it makes sense to look at logistics businesses that specialise in that arena. You may be able to apply that particular operation to your business strategy. If it is already working extremely well for them, what can you learn from and apply to your business? More than likely you'll need to modify it a little, but then you're good to go. It beats going through all the testing and teething problems that they invested thousands if not millions in overcoming, right?

Let's say you haven't been able to find a model that suits you for whatever reason — perhaps the uniqueness of your business or the stage you are at with the business — then it's important that you also un-

derstand the purpose of a strategy and what the key elements are that make a business strategy really rock!

First things first: sync with your external and internal environments

Regardless of the size and type of business you are in, there are two major considerations to any business strategy today. The consumer market is constantly in flux. What is a fashionable, or what is a hot item or a service today may not be tomorrow. Everything is changing rapidly, and new gadgets or gizmos are being released so fast that by the time you get it home it's already last year's model. The demand from consumers is powering this drive, which sends signals to the business world that you need to be on your toes or you're going to be left behind. Therefore, here are the two considerations:

1. Your strategy needs to be a direct fit with your *external environment* (the market you are in, the consumers and, if you're a B2B business, the businesses around you; also the economy, online and offline, the country and — the bigger view — the world).
2. Your strategy needs to be a direct fit with your *internal environment* (your business culture, look and feel, the people, the vision, the systems, how you do business, why you're here, your purpose, basically anything within the business).

So let me elaborate on these two major considerations. Think of the external environment like this. If you had a stand in a market or trade show, what would you need to consider when you set the stand up? The positioning of the stand would be important — for example, where you are located in relation to your competitors who are also represented there. You often hear real estate agents go on about location, location, location and you know what, they are right. The worst house in the best street usually attracts more interest than the best house on the main road at a busy intersection. If you are an online e-tailer or service provider, then it is about your ranking through SEO (search engine optimisation) — that is, where you are positioned by the search engines compared to your competitors.

Positioning is critical as it can influence your business-trading outcome, regardless of what product or service you sell. Here is an example. I once worked with a client in retail whose shop was located in a good suburb. With generally high disposable incomes, his clientele were switched on to his offering and happy to invest. The shop had a little shopfront with a window display that suited the product well. All this was great, except for one thing. The shop was located off the main drag, tucked into a side street, so walk-past traffic was almost non-existent. For the particular product they were selling (flowers), a visual and kinaesthetic product, client interaction is a plus and definitely encourages sales. So that location within the marketplace's external environment meant they had to adjust their strategy accordingly. They knew they could not rely on the walk-past traffic and window displays that inspired people to come in and buy. So instead, they concentrated on other sources of business, such as online, corporate and weddings. This meant that the location of the shop influenced the business only minimally. The external environment dictates how you do business. Think of it like this. For humans the external environments include the elements such as nature, wind, water and air. They dictate our survival strategy and they are much more powerful than we are. We get to see this in the frequent news reports of tsunamis, earthquakes and hurricanes, all the way down to traffic jams when it's raining. We have to adapt constantly to the external environment, as we do to our internal environment, our health.

Now you have your stand in the market place and have ensured it's in a good position, the next factor to consider when designing your strategy to suit the external environment is your offering. Time and time again, I see businesses hold on to the past by continuing to offer products or services that are either outdated or not what the consumer wants at some level. In other words, these businesses are not in sync with their external environments. There are almost 7 billion people on this planet so logically there should be enough business for everyone, right? It's not that there aren't enough consumers. Rather, it's that you haven't taken enough time to understand the external environment in

which you are playing. Remember, business is just a game — the key is how you play it!

If a long-established, larger company with mighty marketing budgets is already offering your product or service, you really should consider your offering and positioning. Generally, the business with the biggest marketing budget wins. Now, I know you can argue until the cows come home about the internet and how you don't need a big advertising budget because you can do it all yourself and so on, and I understand, but in reality in the end it's all about marketing your offering. You may have a PhD and have found a cure for cancer but if no one knows who you are or what you are offering, then, chances are limited that it will ever see the light of day. Or by the time it comes to fruition your offering is already outdated. It's not my intention to come across like a terminator here and destroy your dreams. What I want to convey is that first, you need to research your market thoroughly and position yourself and your business carefully within that environment.

For example, not long ago I met a guy who asked me for some advice, which of course I was more than happy to provide. He began the conversation like this: 'I have a product that I know there is a need for and everyone I have shown it to so far think it's the best thing they have ever seen!' This sparked my interest and I eagerly waited for him to elaborate. After an hour of back-and-forth questioning, he finally revealed what his secret weapon was. It was a 'dry' soft drink delivery model similar to the Berocca vitamin product that Bayer offers at the moment. Basically, it is a tube that contains five or six tablets. Drop a tablet into water and it begins to dissolve, creating an effervescent effect that lasts for a few seconds. At first glance I thought, that's pretty cool. Therefore, I asked a few more questions, the first being what the product was designed to do; and what was his position in the market place he intended to play in.

He answered with the following: 'The product is designed to replace soft drinks such as Coke and Pepsi. The convenient tablet form means

you won't need to buy heavy bottles or cans from the supermarket, lug them to the car and try to fit them in the pantry. You simply dissolve the tablet in water and there you have your soft drink. To start with I'm going to position it against Red Bull, and then I'll take it from there.'

It sounds simple, right. I then asked what his marketing and R&D (research and development) budget was (\$20,000) and how much product testing he had done? ('I have a prototype and have shown it to some friends of mine and they loved it').

Let me sum this up here. He has a product with unclear positioning ('I'll start up against Red Bull and then I'll take it from there'), a delivery method that is unproven with zero testing (friends don't count as they may be biased) and no development budget (\$20,000 doesn't even begin to cover the legal patent searches for this type of product). Can you see what I am getting to? What I was seeing here was that his strategy was out of sync with its external environment'. Here is why.

A fizzy soft drink needs some type of carbonated water. The tablet delivery method will not keep the liquid carbonated for any length of time, so you still need to buy carbonated water unless you have one of those soda stream soft drink makers that have some type of carbonation system. The next challenge is the R&D around taste, packaging and then marketing the product. If you are going to take on a heavy-weight like Red Bull, you had better have deep pockets! Red Bull is a Coke product and they are not going to give up market share without a fight. And they have a few more dollars to spend. The other challenge that I see with this is that the canister- tablet delivery method already exists, so there is not anything unique and attempting to patent the product will prove challenging. My advice ended with, 'You should spend more time researching the field, looking into patent costing, and test and measure, test and measure, test and measure. Don't spend your grandma's hard-earned money.' (This is where he found the \$20,000.) This was not what he wanted to hear.

In business, it is common that you think you have the solution to world poverty, though in reality you may struggle to get this business model as far as your dinner table. In order to survive in a changing market you need to be innovative and to measure your progress. The data speaks for itself. I am constantly surprised by how many business owners don't measure their progress or rely on projected figures often sourced from poor research. He showed it to his friends and of course, they loved it! Do you see what I mean about product offering? Do your research first. Find out who the players are in the market, identify your competition and analyse how they do what they do. This way you have a point of reference for your business.

The key to your strategy is to make sure you are offering a product or service that others want and can use easily and that is cost effective — that is, that consumers are prepared to pay for and see value in. It's no use trying to offer what your consumer already has a lot of or doesn't really need.

For example, in the early eighties Rubik's Cube took the world by storm. I was fascinated and frustrated at the same time. Anyone who has wrestled with one of those suckers knows what I'm talking about, right? The point is it was an amazing product for the time — high demand, great marketing and you just had to have one, even if all you did was peel the stickers off to get the colours realigned again (not that I know anything about that, of course). Now, if you were trying to sell Rubik's Cube again today perhaps you might want to do some research about the target audience; and whether there would be any demand for this gadget. The market today is flooded with so many games and devices to keep us occupied; one of the biggest areas is video gaming. Rubik's Cube is a great concept, but the external environment has changed, adapted and grown into something completely different.

Positioning: find or create a market niche

What I see, and read a lot about in *Harvard Business Review* (if you're in business and you don't subscribe already, *do it now* — you need to

read this magazine or online edition monthly), is that there are new pods of businesses emerging everywhere around the world. They are highly specialised in a product or service that consumers either are ready for and using or did not know they needed, but since having the product or service, it just made their life easier. The operative words here are *specialised, needed, made life easier*. A great example is the Nespresso and DeLonghi combination, with Nespresso delivering coffee in single-use pods and DeLonghi creating the machines in which to prepare it. The collaboration between these two companies has revolutionised the way coffee is consumed. Coffee drinkers can now make great-tasting coffee at home without the intercession of a professional barista. Importantly, the machines are simple to use — pod in, press button . . . we are done! Here is an idea that has been with us for several decades (the pod system), but has now been repackaged and rebranded- and is a perfect fit for the current external environment.

The thing is that this is all they do — no other products, no different delivery systems so if you want one of those fancy-shamancy espresso machines like they have in the café, you will need to go elsewhere. What the company did was listen to what the consumer wanted, research their environment and then create not only a product but also a market niche that they now dominate. Effectively, their offering is just a coffee machine, but if you want easy to use, clean and the ability to sample different styles of coffee without having jars of it going stale, then you've hit the jackpot.

At the end of the day, though, it is just a cup of coffee, not rocket science. Your offering does not have to carry off the 'invention of the year' award; it simply needs to appeal to others and to offer a solution that people see value in. Important questions to ask are:

1. Who does my offering appeal to most?
2. What other offering that is similar to mine are people buying?
3. What is so appealing about that offering to them?
4. What is it about my offering that appeals to others?

These questions will help you understand your positioning in the market- what makes your offering unique and most importantly, why people will buy it. Remember, you can have a great offering but if people do not see value in it, they will not part with their hard-earned cash.

Business culture: it starts in the office

Now we have covered some of the principles around strategy and the fit with the external environment, we can move on to the next element of a successful strategy — the fit between your strategy and the ‘internal environment’. This really gets to what makes your business tick and how you get what you do in your business done. There are different facets of any business, including the complexity of everyday operations, ensuring all the gears are oiled and meshing together, and the critical component of the people who make it all happen for you. Or, if you run a solopreneur style of business, meaning you’re it, then it’s the way you do business.

Often, when a business first engages my mentoring services, I take a careful look at what is going on in the internal environment. Without fail this reflects directly on what is going on in the external environment, and it usually plays a significant role in the type of strategy (if any!) embraced.

For me the first glimpse of the office or workplace or job site usually paints a picture of what’s going on with the internal environment and what’s reflected in the external environment. Here’s a question: If you walked into your place of business today, what do your desk and surroundings look like? Be honest! Does it look like a tornado just blew through? Is there any evidence of a systemised approach or is everything everywhere? I believe that the way you keep your desk and your surroundings dictates what you are actually producing outwardly. Most importantly, it tells me what is going on in your mind. Messy office, messy mind; the two are inseparable. As outwards, so is inwards. So here’s an exercise: If your office or car or worksite is messy, spend a few hours over the next day or so getting some kind of order back

into play. If it's a task equivalent to building a pyramid, then you may want to get in some taskmasters and let them loose. Then write down how your tidy surroundings make you feel. Chances are you'll feel more in control, organised and emotionally liberated.

How you transact and interact with your internal environment has a massive effect on how you project that in your business outwardly. Some of you are going to challenge that and say something like, 'My work or product never suffers because my office is in a mess'. Maybe that's true, but some part of the business does. For example, if you're sloppy in collecting money because your invoice is in dire straits; and you can't remember where the quotes are under that pile of papers. Then sooner or later this will be reflected in the external environment through things like- poor cash flow, chasing up a client for late payment, and not having enough money to pay suppliers or, even worse, employees. Can you see the knock-on effect? Most often, the cause is not what you attribute it to; it is usually something you cannot see. This is the whole premise behind invisible hurdles. What I want to suggest here is that a messy internal environment can and will affect the external environment at some level. They complement each other. This is why the 'fit' between them is so important.

The office environment is just one component of the internal environment and is part of a larger picture. Let's get back to the strategic questions of what you do in your business and what type of culture you are building. Here's what I mean. When you think of internet-based organisations, you just can't get past Google. So, what makes the way they do business so unique, and why do thousands want to work for them?

Firstly, they have set up a strategy of doing business in a fun environment. They realise that their employees will work better in an environment that is nurturing and far from the traditional model of suits and skyscrapers and little office cubicles. They understand that happy employees are productive employees, and the more time they spend in a cool environment the more productive they will be. Google

employees have an incredible level of 'buy-in'. What this means is that they are raving fans of the company and they spread the news like wildfire and defend the company like a mother protecting her baby from a predator. Think about this for a second. Whatever your business, you are likely to spend a minimum of eight to ten hours in a particular place- Whether in office, truck, car, shop or worksite. So, it makes sense that a key factor in designing your strategy around your internal environment is that you set up a place of work where you and/or your staff are happy, productive and moving towards an agreed goal.

Another business challenge I see all too often is a lack of the basic structural elements within the business, such as organisational flow charts, operations manuals and systemised procedures, from answering the phone to creating a product or service and much more. This deficiency creates instability through what I call 'loose threads'. Pull on a loose thread of a sweater and the next thing you know you have half a sleeve in your lap. The whole things start to come undone, literally. Well, it is the same if the business basics threads are exposed — you risk parts of or the whole business falling apart.

When Rudy Giuliani was elected mayor of New York City, it was deemed one of the most dangerous cities in the world. He started with the small things: one of the first policies he put into place was cleaning the graffiti off the trains. He believed that if people, both locals and visitors, saw that the 'internal environment' (in this case the infrastructure) was being taken care of, it would set a new standard that would reflect more widespread change in New York City, effectively transforming it into one of the most amazing metropolises on the planet. Starting with the basics, tidying up shop, he would eventually write his name in the history books. The strategy Giuliani used set the precedent for a perfect fit between the internal and external environments. The bottom line is that each affects the other.

Now it's time to speak about how to put the pieces of the strategy puzzle together, because, yes, it is a puzzle and the different pieces need

to connect with each other, as each will help you to set the borders of the infrastructure or form a part of the nucleus. Anyone who has done a Jigsaw puzzle will understand this: you start with the outline and then move inwards.

Do not reinvent the wheel

It may sound back to front but, as I've already suggested, the first part of developing a business strategy is looking around for a model that has already been used successfully. By 'model', I mean an entire developed system or template. A dictionary definition is *'a system or thing used as an example to follow or imitate or a simplified description, esp. a mathematical one, of a system or process, to assist calculations and predictions.'* In other words, a turnkey solution has worked well for a business before.

This is how business franchises work. They follow a complete instruction manual from start to finish — all the operational procedures, marketing, sales, staff and processes such as banking. Following a model saves time, money and many headaches. You do not need to reinvent the wheel (although you may be able to improve it). This means the hard work has already been done for me. In business, time is of the essence. Most businesses I know do not have the luxury of spending the first 12 months building a business model and testing it to see if it works. So if you can find one that fits your business, one that you can modify and that has been tested in the marketplace, then great.

In truth, finding a model is not easy. That is why franchise models are for sale. What you are looking for is research on what people in your field are doing well, what is working for them. You may be thinking, who is going to give me what they know about how to operate their business? Look at it like this. Business entrepreneurs around the world operate similar businesses that are not in direct competition with you and perhaps never will be. The fact is that business owners who subscribe to the idea of giving back or helping others are more than interested in giving you the tools and skills to help you build your

business model. In some cases, they will even share their model with you, whether free or for a fee. Let me give you an example.

Until not that long ago, businesses needed to pay web designers massive amounts of money to build a website for them. Now you can use tools like WordPress that offer a developer-built website template, often at such low cost you could consider it free. In addition, there are many businesses that want to share their success with you, for instance through blog posts, webinars and in-person seminars. I too subscribe to this mindset. It's an UPology approach. *Help others as much as you can by sharing what has worked for you!* Please make a mental note of that. If a business gave you everything they know, every model they have that has worked, it is still going to take hard work to assimilate it into your internal environment. No two businesses operate in exactly the same way, even if they sell the same products or services. This is what makes you unique!

Here is another invisible hurdle around strategy. I have come across 'below the line' thinkers in business, who blame, justify, fear, guard, make excuses and so on. They are convinced that if they gave away any of their business strategy or revealed how their model works, someone else would rip it off and use it against them. If you are thinking like that, STOP! This invisible hurdle will lock you into a fear mentality and stop you from growing. How do you know there aren't better ways to operate your business or develop your model? I studied with a Buddhist monk for about six months and one of the lessons I learned was to *let information go*. It is fluid one second and 'in formation' the next. It comes and goes, creates and destroys itself, and is always evolving into different forms. One thing is certain: change itself.

By the way, if you cannot find a model then do not despair. I am also going to show you the elements you need in order to build your own UPstanding strategy. After all, everything I do is about looking at the UPside of every situation.

Plan, plan, plan . . . then plan some more

If you want freedom in your business, freedom to check how things are going, freedom to watch your progress or anticipate your demise, above all freedom to develop the business that you want, then business planning is the foundation. Within the business, strategy lays the business plan. The business plan includes information on the internal and external environments as well as other strategic information. Much has been written about business planning, and the consensus is that it centres on a complex, encyclopaedic document that contains your DNA profile and every meal you have consumed as a business since day one. This could not be further from the truth. A business plan is a snapshot of your business now and of what you plan on doing for the next 12 to 24 months, including your goals and financial projections and how you intend to achieve them.

You need to plan your business carefully. You will have heard this a thousand times, yet 99 per cent of the business owners I meet seem not to understand the importance of a plan for either their business or their life. I have heard so many excuses I could write a book just on the reasons why they do not have a business plan. It is interesting because almost everything else you do in life needs some kind of plan, whether or not it's written into a document. Even to read this book required some sort of planning on your part. You are always planning!

I like to use online business plan software called Live Plan. You can use whatever you choose, as long as you have access to it and it can be modified.

I'm not sure what's so scary about business planning is. It really is simple. Don't mistake simple with easy, though. Simple is a way of thinking, the opposite of complex; easy is in the doing. In other words simple is the opposite of complex.

Earlier, I recommended that your plan be for the next 12 to 24 months, and I did so for a reason. Traditionally, business planning followed a standard five- to ten-year model. What do you intend your

business to be, do and have within those years? As we have discussed, the external environment is changing rapidly, and long-term planning can be a death sentence for business today. Consumers' needs are in flux: what they needed yesterday may be different from what they need today. This is not to say they fly by the seat of your pants with no planned approach; it's rather that you focus on shorter views that you can review and adjust often. The standard plan once came with so much data that you needed to be an analyst to decipher it.

Therefore, here is what I believe a good business plan should have. (You can add to it or remove from this according to what you feel comfortable with.) It should begin with an overview of what the business is about and what you sell to the consumer, be it B2B or B2C. It should contain financial figures. This includes; actual and projected revenues you are expected to bring in, and how you intend to do this. It should outline what you intend to do and when you intend to exit the business. Yes, this is important too. Regardless of what business you are in, you need to plan for when you are going to exit the business or your participation to minimal contact. I can hear you now, 'What else would I do, and who would want to buy this business anyway?'

If you plan on working forever in your business, then you are defeating the purpose of having a business. One reason for running your own business is so you do not have to work always for the 'man' and to build an asset that brings in revenue. You are doing what you like to do, when you like to do it and with whom you want to do it. In short, the business model should complement your lifestyle. The business should work for you rather than the other way around. Therefore, setting up an exit strategy is not so farfetched. It gives you something to aim towards to start with. It means you start with an end in mind. In other words, it makes you consider that rather than cruising along being paid for the hours that you put into the business, you are actually developing a saleable asset. The UPology mindset is looking for every positive in everything you undertake, every scenario you put yourself into. It is a way of processing thought.

Looking at the outcome from a different perspective makes a huge difference. Take the exit strategy, for example, if in your business strategy you factor in that in X years you plan to have a business that is a saleable asset, then the approach automatically becomes different. For those of you who, like me, are solopreneurs, building an asset for sale would be something like an online membership program, a product that is developed and packaged and so on, and a turnkey solution that can be replicated and has a system that can be operated. Your business must appeal to someone else who sees a massive amount of value there, sufficient to persuade them to part with their hard-earned cash. The exit strategy is another one of the foundation puzzle pieces that is imperative for every business.

Now when the time comes to make the decision whether to sell or to sit back and collect an income that will be up to you. Think of what you can do next, what the next adventure will be for you, what other type of business you would like to play in! Now that you've reached the exit part, it's the other side of the moon I want to share with you. Vision. The vision of what you are or have built for yourself. This is the most important foundation piece of the business plan and strategy puzzle. It sets the course for where you and your business are heading.

Vision: we will go to the moon!

'We will get there before the turn of the century!' Wow! Sorry, but I just had to put that in. To me, JFK's moon speech shows the true essence of what vision is. He painted a picture for humanity at the time, gave us hope and something to aspire to together. It created competition that helped make us grow. The vision Kennedy shared revealed much more than a space race; it showed how as humans we can accomplish anything we put our mind to. It didn't come without a price though. It shits me when I see all those postings on Facebook: 'You just need to dream it to achieve it' or 'Think it and it will manifest itself in your life'. You know the ones. But everything comes with a price. It's the risk versus reward model. The bigger your vision, the higher your responsibility to yourself and to others, therefore the more you need to sacrifice. For example, most times buying a packet of chips from the

shop doesn't come with either high responsibility or risk — except if you buy a packet from this old school shop owner I used to know when I was 12.

As kids, we used to go into the shop to terrorise the guy by hassling him for bargains, telling him we'd bring the money next time or showing him that the packet was damaged already so he had to give us a discount. It was the era when you could buy one of those mini ring-pulls could of drink for 12 cents.

Okay, enough reminiscing let us go back to it. Before we continue, let me be clear. Let's not mistake boundaries for responsibilities. A vision is about dreaming up amazing possibilities. The moon-landing mission was one example. The exciting part is having a massively ambitious, almost impossible, 'out there' vision. This is what has pushed us to growth as human beings. Responsibility is about not being lazy, letting yourself off the hook or settling for second best. You can achieve anything, but you need to take responsibility, once you have set the vision, for making it happen. If you have a vision in your business or personal life to do something amazing that will have impact on many other people, then your responsibility is high and the risks are equally high. Imagine for a moment that your business vision is to create a service that will help school children learn 50 per cent faster than they do now. You will face challenges, including the risks of upsetting the status quo in the education system. Your vision comes with significant responsibility. There are students all over the world who would love the opportunity to learn 50 per cent faster than they are right now. Do you see what I mean?

The best way to explain a vision is through a question. I could ask you, 'What do you see your business becoming or evolving into?' or 'What problem does your business solve, and what's the solution?' For example, in 1950 Boeing set the following vision: *Become the dominant player in commercial aircraft and bring the world into the jet age.*

Now take a sheet of paper and write down your business vision. It may take a little while for you to articulate it, so call it a work-in-progress for a few weeks until it sits really well with you. On the other hand, you may have squared it away already — even better. It should be clear and articulate enough that the layperson can read and understand what your business vision is really about.

The vision is the foundation, the building block for everything in the business. It is what links the internal and external environments. I cannot overstate the importance of this exercise for you and your business. Knowing where you are going is everything. UPology is about a clear mind and a clear direction in life and in business. Clarity comes from planning and faith (not hope, but faith) — faith that what you intend to accomplish through your business resonates with you and is aligned with what your customers want. Vision is what has always bound us together as humans. The goals are to reach out, to make life better, to share with one another, to trade, to develop, to excel.

Without a vision, your business is simply just ticking along, doing what it does with no real sense of purpose. Add vision and you supercharge it to a completely new level. Vision is the glue that binds the people in your business together. It gives everyone the feeling of battling on the same team. In addition, it sets the course for achievement. Once the vision is set, then everything else starts to fall into place. This is why you need to spend time creating what you wanted for your business.

Let's take a flight, for example. It has elements of both planning and vision; 98 per cent of the time the plane's on autopilot. The pilots are there to land and take off, and for emergencies and course corrections; the rest is already programmed. A business plan is similar. Once the course is set for the business through a clear vision and strategic planning, the business owner is there only for any course corrections or emergencies, because most of the time the business will run smoothly, so long as a clear vision (course) has been set. Knowing

where you are heading is massively important for both flight and business. Drifting along just hoping for the best, wandering through the year like every day is ground hog day, without any end in sight — these are recipes for failure.

Have you ever flown to Hong Kong? Just imagine for a moment that you boarded the plane, settled in and just before take-off the pilot's voice, heard distantly over that three-cent PA system they've got installed in the multimillion-dollar aircraft, you know the one, says the following:

*Welcome aboard, ladies and gentlemen, flight UP101 travelling to . . .
. ahh, I'm not sure where we're heading today, though we'll figure out after we take off or mid-flight perhaps . . .*

What would you do? I know what I'd be doing and it would involve the emergency exit chute (I've always wanted to slide down that sucker). I'd be off that plane in a flash. Do you know why? Well, if the captain doesn't know where his aircraft is heading this can't be good, right? How about if the plane doesn't have the right fuel load, or what if the people on board are heading to the wrong destination. I mean, how will you even know which runway to use for take-off and landing? Do you see the similarities here between air travel and business?

Why is it that so many businesses fail to plan the vision for where the business is heading? How will they know where they are heading, whether they have the right staff and clients on board for the journey, or whether they have enough *fuel* (funding, supplies, and resources). Do get the drift? The uncertainty invisible hurdle is right here, the 'what happens if I plan and get this wrong' thinking that paralyzes business owners, stopping them in their tracks. And the 'better the devil you know' syndrome. I remember speaking to a business owner about creating a vision for his business and his response amazed me: "The reason I don't set a vision or direction is because I don't know what I'm doing from day to day let alone over a year or two . . . How I could have a vision. I'm just a small business, and my old man always

told me not to be a dreamer.’ Is anyone getting the memetic structure here? This is a common mindset among SMEs. I call it ‘small think syndrome’ or STS: being too scared to dream or create a vision for your business because you think you are not worthy or that you may fail. You may want to ask yourself: Have I thought like that?

Here are some questions for you that I like to ask my mentoring clients to help them construct their vision. If you had all the money and time in the world, what would your business vision look and feel like? Where do you want your business to get to? What contribution would you make on this amazing planet on which we live?

UPology is about thinking bigger than you. It’s about serving others with your greatness, with your ability to dream and create a legacy, which I’ll cover further a little later. You are made up of the same material as every human being on this planet so why think your vision is less important than others’ are.

Having set your vision, it’s now time to turn this vision into reality in your business, and this is where the ‘mission’ comes into play.

Mission Control: we are going

The mission is to turn your vision into reality. What is your business going to produce or serve in order to transform the thought into this plane of existence? It’s what owning and running a business is all about, I believe. Business, for me, is a tool that helps turn your dream into a working model. It’s the ‘converter unit’ that you can feel and touch. Best of all, if you’re successful you even get paid to have your vision come to reality. That’s cool, isn’t it? Consumers ‘buy into’ your vision and get to be a part of it, whether it’s in product or service form.

The mission is what gives your vision shape and substance. This is where some business owners face their biggest challenge. Either they don’t have a clear enough vision (or none at all) so they get caught up in the mission only without the understanding the why, or (the other side of the coin) they have the vision but don’t put enough clarity or

thought into how to make their vision a reality. Let me give you an example.

Kennedy's mission was for Americans to reach the moon by spacecraft within the decade and to commission a federal space agency, The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). This is the agency of the United States government that is responsible for the nation's civilian space program and for aeronautics and aerospace research. He also announced, 'we will be conducting manned flight into space'. Therefore, it was the mission that made the vision of 'We will go to the moon by the turn of the century' happens. He didn't say we're going somewhere but I'm not sure where or when, or we know where we're going but we're thinking of taking the bus there!

Vision and mission statements need to complement each other and be sufficiently grounded in reality to make it all happen. Remember, the vision and mission statements are a guide and are usually constructed at a more global level, or Chunk UP for you NLP fans. In lay terms, they are the bigger picture thinking.

JFK didn't have to go into a massive amount of detail around what the exact mission components were going to be. If you remember, NASA built the Gemini project (early spacecraft) before moving on to the Apollo Project 1-17. So the mission evolved over time, though the certainty was they were going to use rockets and astronauts as a strategy to get to the moon and turn Kennedy's and the world's vision of a manned moon landing a reality.

When you are constructing the mission for your business, make sure that what your business currently does is in line with your vision. Earlier I mentioned this as a challenge for business owners whose vision is out of sync with their mission. For example, if your vision is to make the world a greener place and you are a spare parts bulldozer supplier for the coal industry, then there is a potential conflict there, right? This is why the two statements need to be developed in unison. You should clearly explain in a few paragraphs what your overall strategy is. Hav-

ing fun with this task is the key to it. It doesn't cost anything to dream and create a vision of where you want to go with your business. It does, however, take thought and time, knowing that it is a work-in-progress that evolves.

As I have explained, the business plan provides a road map to refer to every 90 days or so, checking to make sure you're still on track and following the course that you originally set out on. What I like to do in the beginning pages of a business plan is to produce a single-page 'summary'. Think of it as a condensed version that has enough information that any reader gains a good sense of what your business is about and where it's coming from.

Now, there are many components of a business plan that could be covered here. Indeed, I could write an entire book on the subject. So what I recommend is that you research other authors whose expertise lies in business plan design. One I like is Linda Pinson's, set out in *Anatomy of a Business Plan*. She makes it easy and straightforward. You can look for further models online.

Through my coaching experience one of the factors, I see that leads business owners into trouble is a lack of constant testing and measuring. Creating a strategy means you are also creating a mechanism by which you can 'test, measure and adjust' elements as needed.

Have you ever been to an outdoor rock concert and arrived a little early to find the crew still setting up the sound system and doing their audio checks? Once the PA system is set up and connected, the audio engineer needs to test the frequencies and volumes in order to get the balance right for the various musicians and instruments. They test the high sound frequencies and the low, deep frequencies until they get it perfect. What a lot of people don't understand is that during the concert the sound engineer needs to continuously adjust to different voices and instruments, let alone crowd size and changing weather changes (wind and rain affects the sound), because the acoustics and the dynamics of the concert changes constantly.

How does this relate to business strategy? What I have seen is that business owners set plans in motion but for whatever reason (often they are busy and caught up in other things), rarely test and measure on a regular basis. What happens is that for a long time (as can happen at a poorly monitored concert), if adjustments aren't made you get a substandard performance. It's important then that a strategy is reviewed regularly and adjusted according to changes in the environment. Most of the time, even the smallest of adjustments, can make a significant impact, leading to amazing improvements in performance and output.

Goal setting

"A goal is not always meant to be reached, it often serves simply as something to aim at."

- Bruce Lee

I like to check my business plan every 30–60 days just to make sure all my figures are looking good and my marketing and sales plans are on track and gaining momentum. As long as you review it, you can change it! Leaving a business strategy unchecked leads to all sorts of dramas that can be hard to recover from or adjust at a later stage. Another way I like to 'chime in' is through goal setting.

More than likely if you're living in a western country you will have heard mention of goal setting in some shape or form. I find Bruce Lee's words here inspiring, just as I have drawn on his inspiration in my martial arts practice. Whether it be life goals or business goals, the most important thing is actually to write them down in some legible format (Klingon, if your Klingon is good). Goal setting involves a process of measurement and gives you something to look forward to. Here's what I mean. Say, for example, you want to earn \$20,000 a month over the next 12 months. Therefore, your goal is 'I would like to earn \$240,000 per annum in my businesses. Writing that goal down automatically gives you the formula you need:

- A. The overall 12-month picture = \$240,000
- B. The monthly figure = \$20,000
- C. The weekly figure = roughly \$5000
- D. The timeframe = 12 months.

Do you see that just from a brief written goal-setting statement you can begin the strategy of earning the required income?

In one of my goal-setting workshops, I started to uncover an invisible hurdle that I kept on coming across. It was interesting to see the impact of this hurdle and how it unfolded. Some participants told me they were conditioned, by the idea that 'if you didn't achieve the goal you set, you were a failure'. But it was the next one that fascinated me: 'If you set a goal you were under pressure to achieve it, which meant hard work and possibly letting yourself or others down in the process, so it was better not to set the goal in the first place.' Is that interesting or what?

Time and time again, I have witnessed this defeatist thinking process manifesting itself in a business or personal beating. It simply defies logic how some people make decisions affecting their future based on a single event in the past that in most cases has no relevance to the present decision scenario. Worrying about setting goals that you are convinced you will fail to achieve simply isn't logical. How do you know you will fail? Where's your evidence? Some people will say, well I tried this and it didn't work so there's no point in trying it again, because I'll only be disappointed again. The question, again, is how do you know? Things change. You can change. The scenario may be similar but will never be *the* same. This beating has stopped many in their tracks.

For me goal setting is a great way to timeline what you are working to achieve over a given period. I like to use the reverse engineering model, looking at the result or outcome and working back from there. By looking at goal setting this way you are actually developing a strategy for how you are going to make the goal a reality. The important thing

to note here is that strategy does not have to be written in stone or something that someone else did; it just has to suit you. All you need is to be able to unpack it and explain it to yourself and others. If you can't explain your strategy, then you may want to reconsider how practical it's going to be. Reverse engineering gives you, the ability to pull it apart and break it down into bite-size portions that you can work on. For example, if I have a personal goal of losing 10 kg in five months, then I know I need to lose around 2 kg per month. I can also then break that down further by asking:

1. What steps do I need to take first?
2. What tools do I need?
3. How can I be accountable for my results?
4. How will I measure my progress or timeline?

You see, when you start with the end in mind you have the ability to envision what's coming. Having some type of strategy or game plan gives you that foresight and helps begin the process of turning your goal into reality. Not having a written goal is equivalent to sailing without a compass. You may eventually get there or you may be lost at sea.

If you're like me, you become obsessed with reaching the goals you have set yourself. I have to admit that can become painful and adds undue levels of stress. So what I have been working on is to not attach myself to the outcome.

It is like going fishing. If you catch something, it is a bonus, but it really becomes about the process itself. This is what gives me the pleasure. Now, I'm not saying that I don't like achieving the goals but it's still cool if I never achieve the outcome. Any action you take towards a goal is better than no action or not even setting the goal. If you aim to make \$20,000 per month over the next 12 months and you fall short by three or four thousand per month, is \$16,000 a month bad? Not at all, because you are more than likely still better off than when you started.

What I want you to take away from this is that doing your best in every situation is the UPology attitude. As long as you believe that you have invested your best effort, then in most cases the outcome is irrelevant. Usually what you'll find is that once you use the strategy of reverse engineering your goal into bite-size chunks you are able to achieve the outcome you want without the stress associated with goal setting.

If you aim for the moon and fall short, you're still on top of the world, right? The key is to learn through practice and enjoy the process along the way. I'm amazed how many business owners feel overwhelmed by the constant battle of setting goals. It should be a process not unlike walking. Step by step, one foot in front of the other. Once you get used to making goal setting a regular business strategy you don't even have to think much about the process. Walking really is taking a sequence of steps to stop yourself from falling. With every step, you plant your foot in the right place in order to avoid falling flat on your face. You practise and practise and practise until the process becomes automatic. From there your next step is you add leverage, for forward momentum, which is called running. You become so adept at it that all you have to do is reverse engineer the process by simply thinking about where you want to be and making it happen.

The key word is practice. Through practice, your mindset begins to shift. This process is perfectly aligned with the UPology methodology, where strategy and mastery produce a shift in mindset, leading to evolution of the self. I'll speak more about practice in chapter 7 on mastery. Now what I'd like you to do is to write down five personal and five business goals. Here is my seven-step goal-setting strategy:

1. Write down the goal using the three-question technique.

Recently I had the great privilege of attending an 'Awesomeness Fest' presented by Mindvalley. At that event I got to hang out with Mindvalley's CEO, Vishen Lakhiani, who inspired me with a new approach to goal setting. Remember, a foundation of UPology is constant renewal of self. Since writing the book, I

have changed and grown through such experiences. The three questions are as follows:

- A. What is your vision or goal?
- B. How will it make you grow?
- C. How does it contribute to others?

Once you have established your answers, begin the visualisation process of seeing and feeling the goal you have set (the more detail you can bring to the process the better), and see yourself accomplishing the goal.

2. Reverse engineer the process: start with the end in mind, ensuring you have a date, and work back from there.
3. Write down all the obstacles you can foresee to making this goal a reality. This helps prepare for the terrain ahead.
4. Write down all the solutions to these obstacles. If you don't have a solution, keep going until you find one. This is a sticking point for many business owners. They fail to realise that steps 3 and 4 are critical to achieving the outcome they seek.
5. Timeline the process you are about to undertake by working back from the end date. This allows you to set milestones for where you need/should be at given times throughout the timeline.
6. Create a daily action list. What tasks do you need to do on a regular basis to move you towards the outcome you have set?
7. Write down the goal every day and, most importantly, visualise the goal becoming a reality. This way it stays in your mind and begins the 'law of attraction' process. Remember, we are the creators of our own reality. The clearer the picture and the intent are, the higher the probability that the goal will be realised.

In this chapter, I have introduced the foundations and principles that form the basis of good business strategy, business planning and goal setting. These are essentials in any of the businesses I work with. As I shared earlier, if you know where you and your business are going you have a greater chance of getting there. The essentials that I have shared are what I call the overarching business design principles. They include where the business is heading, how we plans to get there and what goals we can aim for.

I like to think of it like this. If the overarching principles are the face of a watch (for anyone who feels the urge to send me a gift after reading this book, I like watches!), what you see when you look at it, the look and feel, the position of the hour and minute hands and therefore the time. Now what I am about to share with you is what I call the *mechanism*, or what makes the watch function. Some of the mechanism is showing — you know, like the watches that have a partially open face or a clear backing plate. You get to see the little cogs turning, moving, and meshing with each other, though not all of it is visible most of the time. The mechanism is what breathes life into the watch, as it does into a business. The strategy provides the vision. One cannot function without the other. They need to mesh well and find their place within the designed framework. Just like gears in a watch, every component plays a vital role in the business.

I believe, as my friend Shaune Clarke says, that everything has its place in the weave of the universe. So the components that make the business come to life all have their place. They are dependent on functioning perfectly with each other. What's important is how you put them together. Yes, *you*. You are creating your business strategy. How you create it, the quality of your creation and the life you bring to your business as a result — these are all up to you!

Chapter 6: Building a (sales) strategic plan that works

*“Continuous effort — not strength or intelligence
— is the key to unlocking our potential.”*

- Sir Winston Churchill

I like to think of strategy as a ‘transformer’ — not like the blockbuster movie Transformers, but more like something that helps you turn what you need to accomplish into reality. Strategy changes thought into action. Without a strategy — or a game plan, as many like to call it — whatever you’re looking to achieve may take longer to bring off than it needs to. This is because in order to complete your goal, many processes or moving parts need to fall into place, and they need to do so synchronously, harmoniously or in a certain sequence, or you will fall short of the mark. Let me explain. To drive a car from point A to point B you need to work out a strategy that includes a set of mechanical steps in a specific sequence:

1. Find keys.
2. Open door.
3. Insert key in ignition.
4. Start car.
5. Shift into gear.
6. Point car in direction of destination.

And so on. You see what I mean. The strategy sets out an action sequence that ensures you reach your destination efficiently.

In the same way, the human body cannot function unless its internal organs work together in complete harmony within their environment. All our organs have a place in the human ecosystem, and all human beings have a place in the greater ecosystem of the Earth. Business too is an ecosystem within the consumer environment, which operates within a larger environment called society. Environments within envi-

ronments- All have a function and all are in or out of sync with one another.

When your business operates harmoniously within its ecosystem, you have a great connection with everything and everyone around you. This is usually demonstrated internally through a happy workplace, where all employees work together for the greater good of the business, and externally through happy consumers, who love your product or service, are please to endorse you and become loyal supporters. For the business owner the secret is to create such an environment. The tighter the fit, the better the business functions as a unit. So it's important in creating the strategy around the internal mechanisms of your business that you carefully examine each component and that you run each as though the entire business relied on it for survival. Because, you guessed it, it does.

All the components of your business ecosystem have a job to do, be it large or small. As in the human body, certain functions are more prominent than others are and even are more vital than others are. As we are aware, in some cases certain components in business play a more fundamental role than others. That's not to say that all the components are not essential; it's just that some take precedence over others. One of the common questions I hear from clients in my one-on-one coaching programs is, 'Nick, where do I start? There are so many things I need to do but I'm not sure where to begin'. If you too feel this way or have had this thought, I completely understand. What I want to do now is passing on to you the simple strategy I use with all my businesses. *Just be UPfront*. This doesn't mean there's a one-size-fits-all model. A model may work for you or you may need to modify it to make it work. Every business is unique, but all businesses share certain foundations. This chapter focuses on sales, but most of the general principles may be applied equally to other areas of business (and indeed life) strategy.

You need a sales strategy!

The UPology principles you are learning about in this book are introduced in a certain sequence because I feel that one needs to come before another or the 'fit' between the overarching message and the content will be out of harmony or sync. The important thing is to implement what you learn and modify it according to what works best in your unique circumstances. So let's get moving.

The best way for me to explain this to you is that it all starts with careful consideration of what's important. Once you have incorporated the vision, mission, values and goals into some sort of business plan, as discussed in the previous chapter, the next thing is to sell your product or service, right? Does this mean you ignore all the other components in the business? Not at all! It's just that if you're not selling, well, frankly you're not in business; rather, you have a hobby. Some people love what they do but they don't sell anything, so they don't make a profit, although they still receive some income/contributions, which keeps their doors open.

I know some readers right now are getting a little hot under the collar, saying to themselves how can you sell anything if you don't have your marketing in place? How will clients find your business and discover what you're selling? Yet there are plenty of businesses that have been killing it through referrals and word-of-mouth, right? This is why in the business ecosystem I believe that marketing, even though a highly important and necessary component doesn't come first in the pecking order.

Here are some sales questions I recommend you start with:

- A. Do I have a sales strategy?
- B. What's important for me to measure my progress?
- C. How will I improve on my results?

Almost all the businesses I work with or know have no sales strategy whatsoever. When I ask for their sales figures, they give me a blank

stare, like the proverbial deer caught in the headlights. If you are in the same space, it's cool, but you're about to change your ways.

While I'm here I want to share something with you, just from one person to another. Whatever you take away from this book is up to you. My intention is that it will serve you throughout all areas of your personal and business life. One thing is certain: once you've read it you'll never again be able to bury your head in the sand and claim no one told you the importance of a sales strategy. Because guess what, I just did! *You need a sales strategy!* There it is again. You see, your mind is plastic. What I mean by that is that once it expands it can never retract to its previous size. You can't unlearn things and say they were never there. You can forget or even purposefully erase something from your mind, though the neural pathways remain imprinted.

So what do you need in your sales strategy and why do you need it? The answer is that first, you need to know your numbers and what strategy you are using to obtain those numbers. Numbers don't lie. They reflect what's going on in real time or they may be used as what I call a 'lagging indicator'. For example, if you do your monthly financial figures, which we will cover shortly, more than likely you will be able to tell me with a certain degree of accuracy what your business figures were for the month or in previous months, as you will have had time to calculate and review your performance. A lagging indicator, then, reflects events that have already happened to give you an indication of your sales and revenue performance for the previous months. This is why one of the most important functions of your sales strategy is to keep an accurate account of numbers. The numbers I am referring to include:

1. How many appointments have you made or how many prospects have come into the store?
2. How many of those prospects would like to take your offering to the next level (for example, requesting a proposal from you or a second appointment)?
3. How many prospects have you converted into paying clients?

What you should be looking for is your closing ratio — the number of prospects that have become clients and or customers. The numbers will give you a reliable indication of how your sales strategy is performing. For example, if you are seeing ten prospects a week and on average, you are converting two of them, then you have a one-on-five or 20 per cent closing ratio. This is reasonably low. For your business it may be the industry standard but, as you might guess, I'd say to hell with what the industry says. I'll do it my way and get the best result I possibly can. What you then need to do is review your sales strategy. You may for example, need to look at:

- Your approach
 - The quality of your clients your presentation
 - Your price point
- Your closing techniques
- Rapport-building techniques
- Understanding your clients' needs

Sales is about building strong relationships

The part I like most about any strategy is that it can all be measured and tested, as long as the data you enter the information accurately. Once you have the closing ratios, you'll begin to form a clear indication of what's happening. One strategy I like to share with my clients is to constantly refine or reinvent your methods of data delivery until you find the most effective and easy-to-deliver sales strategy that is best suited to you. I also say to my clients, be authentic. If your strategy is using sales techniques from other people, you know or workshops you attended, make sure that they sit right with you, that you have learned the principles and delivered them in your own style and fashion.

Sales are about building strong relationships. The sale is the result of the effort you have put into that relationship, which by the way should be the beginning of an ongoing relationship. Many businesses believe it is simply their product or service that their customers purchase. I feel it actually goes well beyond that. Sales are about people. It's about the attitude towards the sale. It's about connecting by telling your story through the product or the service you are offering. I often share

with my clients the importance of building trust by being transparent. The trust starts by changing the word *sale* into the word *relationship* in your mindset. Sale suggests a finite and one-sided exchange, a win/lose rather than a win/win. Relationship, on the other hand, equals long term, give and take, listening to one another, win/win, both parties looking forward to serving each other, you with your business, the client with referrals, recommendations and testimonials.

Do you see how the little things are what UPology is all about? It's about choice, the choice to change your vocabulary — from limiting to open and adaptive to your internal and external environment.

A great way to test your sales strategy is by recording your conversations using a mobile device. This allows you to hear both parties in the exchange and to learn, adapt and implement changes in response. You can pinpoint the parts of the sales process that you need to refine. It allows for continuous improvement.

Your objective is always to exceed your customers' expectations

Transparency is critical not only for relationship building but for your online sales strategy.

If I had to ask you what is the internet and where is it housed, I believe many of you reading this book would be hard pressed to offer a definitive answer. Me too. Yet, amazingly, we can't even imagine life without the opportunities the internet has brought to our lives. If you don't have an internet sales strategy, take my word for it, within five years you'll no longer be in business. Think it's not true? Look around you and see the changes in the way consumers are buying products and services. Currently 30 per cent of all my coaching business takes place using the video conferencing platforms Skype or Go To Meeting, which allow me to reach around the world with my products and services. Pretty cool, right?

A few years ago, this would not have been possible. Today you have the choice of being engaged in the online world or not having a business and living your life on a beach somewhere. This is not to say that every business in the world depends solely on the web, although a massive proportion do have some level of engagement there. From a sales perspective, selling on the internet is not that dissimilar to doing it in person. What you need to do is replace the usual dialogue with well-written copy, relating your story and your belief in what you are selling, and to really listen to what your clients' needs are.

To make the experience feel more authentic, consider incorporating video. Holographic technology, the next big thing, is just about to go mainstream. Again, reviewing all the opportunities offered to businesses by the technological aspects of the web would take up an entire book. What I do want to emphasise, though, is two of the most important points for any internet selling transaction.

A. Ensure that your service or product far exceeds the exaggerated expectation of your consumer.

You need to treat your clients as though they were saving your life by donating an organ you desperately need! Do you get the drift? It's really simple. NO CLIENTS — NO BUSINESS! It never ceases to amaze me how many businesses treat their customers like they were a pain in the ass.

B. Make it really easy for the consumer to feel completely safe with their purchase.

Almost every purchase decision is made only after an inner debate over whether it is the right choice. This is even more the case for internet purchases, which lack the whole kinaesthetic dimension, the touchy-feely part that adds to the buying experience.

People buy from people, whether directly in the traditional way or in the virtual, two-dimensional space of the internet. Having made the consumer feel safe and confident through the sales process, the icing on the cake is *the law of reciprocity*. Consider as a part of your

online/offline sales strategy going beyond what your customer expects, for example by throwing in free delivery or a 100 per cent returns policy paid for by you. So if the product doesn't suit or they aren't completely satisfied you arrange for a pick-up and full refund, no questions asked. Then keep in contact with them, showing them you really value their custom.

If it sounds like I'm smoking some type of herb, let me assure you that this is how some of the online monsters out there like Zappos and Amazon already operate. All those who haven't yet jumped on this bandwagon are doing so now, realising that they are already behind the eight ball and losing their clients to the competition. Your sales strategy should now include the analytics (as discussed at the start of this chapter), the nurture process (how you are looking after the client), follow-up (whether or not the consumer continues to purchase from you) and finally the unexpected gift process (the law of reciprocity).

Once you have your sales strategy under control the next, highly important element is setting up how people can contact you and become a part of the amazing experience you offer as an UPologist, the experience only you can provide through a level of care that turns your customers into an obsession that keeps you up at night. As an UPologist I am here to serve others. I do this with the deep knowledge that as I serve others I am also fulfilling my life's purpose. As discussed in the following chapters, it is through this ongoing conditioning that you derive the sense of fulfilment that is one of the main reasons you are in business in the first place. The ongoing nature of selling is about connecting and sharing your vision with like-minded people.

Let me give you a little insight into my mindset around sales. I believe that if I don't create a pleasurable experience by offering unrivalled transparency and professionalism, I am doing a massive injustice to my prospective and/or repeat clientele. Also, if for whatever reason the transaction between us doesn't bear fruit, I feel I have cheated the customer by failing to provide what they need. Of course, not everyone

is always going to say yes to my offering, so instead of thinking I have failed I feel that I have simply made space for the next customer who wants to build a relationship with me to fulfil their needs or wants. This is the way of the UPologist — to make it a priority to help others.

The sales role hurdle

Before we move on, I want to share with you some invisible hurdles that I see constantly in my workshops and coaching. Many people in sales roles face the daily challenge that they are actually petrified of selling, finding it an abrasive process that makes them feel uncomfortable every time they are placed in the situation. Most of this is due to their memetic structures, as we've discussed. They believe something that was implanted in their mind in an early sales course or through a sales colleague: for example, that sale is an aggressive process in which you coerce others into buying your product or service. You fear rejection, believing that (a) you personally are being attacked and often take a beating and (b) if your customer doesn't move forward with you it is your fault. Such thinking couldn't be further from the truth. What it creates is a lack of confidence among business owners and sales people.

I believe that the whole process is fundamentally about building relationships rather than selling. Understanding the distinction helps explain why some decide to move forward while others may need to think about the process a little more. Shifting your perspective is another UPology trait. You can't think of the process as relationship building if a sense of taking a beating and of feeling personally rejected is triggered every time you're in a sales situation. It's as simple as that! You don't always say yes to everything that people offer you, right? You have the ability to choose. You should never take it personally, because it isn't. Even as they are telling you the reasons why they don't wish to proceed, how will you ever know that they don't have their own beatings to deal with?

Millions of sales people around the globe experience such beatings on a daily basis. Can you imagine what that does to the untrained? They

eventually become so conditioned to the experience that they are actually surprised when a deal is done or a sale goes through successfully. The mindset is so fixed on a negative outcome that it becomes the set point for their entire performance in sales. Cause and effect are perfectly played out. The sales professional heads into an initial communication expecting failure, and that's exactly what they get. They're so used to that level of beating that in a crazy way they even hope for it, as it is what they are accustomed to and have on some level become immune to.

In essence, sales are the process of looking for the right people who 'fit' into your tribe and are enthusiastic about what you have to offer. The key to your marketing is to create a space where they can come, check it out, and become a part of it. I say 'hopefully' because, remember, there is no certainty except change itself. But if you shine, others will see you!

Refine your operational strategy

How many times have you seen these two words together: *sales* and *marketing*? Almost everywhere, they are written and spoken in unison, and they do share lots of common ground, one helping the other in a cycle or closed loop, so to speak. With sales, you have the ability to market and with marketing, you have the opportunity to sell.

I believe there's a third element to this equation, and that's your *operational strategy*. What I am talking about here is *how* you do your business — your unique way of operating. If you're running a business then you obviously have a particular way of running it. Not all too many business owners I deal with really spend any time looking at these processes. They get caught up in day-to-day operations rather than taking time out to see what's really going on. You may need to do what I refer to as a 'spring business cleanout'. I ask my clients to look at how the operational systems are performing. One of the foundational ideas behind UPology is the Ouroboros, or the continued renewal of self. This applies to everything in business. It's about continually checking performance integrity throughout the organisation,

be it marketing, sales, operations, business planning — you get the drift.

Your operational strategy should have integrity along with functionality. It has to work under pressure. Aircraft parts are tested by being put through a series of stress and failure tests. These reveal how well each component functions under stress as well as its operational limits. Applying this type of thinking allows for continued refinement until such time as it works almost perfectly. I say 'almost' advisedly, because you can spend millions in the attempt but still not attain perfection. Some readers may be thinking, 'Well, I say if it ain't broke don't fix it', and a part of me tends to agree. But if the operational strategy that seems to be working for you was created years ago when your company was at a different stage and is not really cutting the mustard today, then it may actually be 'broken'.

What's most important for any strategy is thought and planning. Looking at your operating strategy, what needs to be overhauled and/or refined? First, let's look at the most important components. What could make your job easier, saving you time and money? Perhaps the way you process orders or your methods of delivery if you are in the food delivery business. If you're in retail, how do you order stock or display it in the shop front. Some processes have an impact on more than one area.

Working with a seafood wholesale business, we looked at how the staff members were processing orders, from the restaurants right through to the packing processes, for a particular product range. What we found was that the clunky ordering system sometimes adversely affected the end order packing, leaving the customer short or with the wrong product. As this was a process within their operating strategy, the business owners sourced an automated ordering system that allowed for picking and packing order slips to be generated. This eliminated 99 per cent of the errors, led to faster operations, and increased revenue, which in turn produced happier customers and new, referred clientele. They are still working on their operational strategy,

but this was an important first breakthrough. Below are what I see as some important of the components of an operational strategy:

- Daily procedures and processes operations manual
- Marketing and sales customer service
- business trading hours
- rules of engagement staff policies.

All these operational components need to be recorded in one format or another. As a business owner, it is vital to work out how I can completely systemise everything within the business so every process has a turn-key solution. This means that if you decide to take an extended holiday sipping mojitos on a beach somewhere, someone else will be able to step in and run things while you're away.

Another important element of your operational strategy that should be included in the business plan is an exit strategy, which should be designed to prepare for two possible future scenarios:

- A. You decide to step back from the business, reducing your commitment to minimal contact.
- B. You decide to sell the business. In this case, a would-be investor will look more favourably on a completely systemised operation.

When you are designing your operational strategy, you need to consider the contact you wish to have and the systems you need to develop for that to happen. Many businesses are overwhelmed by the influx of work in their busy times, such as over the Christmas and school holidays. This indicates that they haven't planned sufficiently, considered all the options and tested them under pressure. If you're a new business owner and haven't yet tested your operational strategy, don't panic, but do measure everything you have done or are about to do. This way, you'll be able to ask the kinds of questions I shared with you earlier about how you can improve and continually renew your strategy until such time as it is saving you time and money.

A great way to expedite your operational strategy is to look for a model that's already been trialled and tested and that you may be able to modify, rather than starting from scratch. I understand, however, that in some cases your business situation will be unique. One way I like to record the systems and procedures within the operations strategy in a modern format rather than the traditional operations manual is through the use of video. This channel allows you to express exactly what you need to without the limitations of the print medium. If you have an online component to the business, such as an e-commerce website, you can use screen-editing software such as Jing or Screen-Flow to help you record, edit and upload your own video. If you use PayPal as a collection system for your online sales, for example, you can record the process step by step while narrating any special notes along the way. I feel this is the way to go. It makes it easy for the end user and can be used more than once.

The engineering model is to build it once and use it often, and if you're going to build one, you may as well build three as it's not going to be that much dearer. For many of my business-coaching clients, some of the recorded systems also act as help for their clients. For example, for an IT company that provides online support and a service help desk, the systems and operational procedures we designed within the overall operational strategy act as help tools for their clients — like how to reboot your router, set up an email signature, or shut down a server. The procedures recorded for internal use also work for external users, effectively covering both bases through one strategy.

Planning: there's no crystal ball

In developing your overall planning and business strategy, it is important to make careful calculations that are grounded in solid planning and research. This affects your operational strategy in more ways than you might imagine. Recently I began working with a client in the construction industry. The business has three legs, and in his planning, he decided that each would be run separately and be responsible for its own revenue generation and operational strategy. The newest entity manufactures doors and windows for high-end res-

identical properties. As he was designing the operational strategy for the group (all three legs of the business), he realised that in order to dedicate the time needed to get the latest entity off the ground he required the commitment of at least two staff members who were already accounted for in the main operation of the parent construction company. He also needed external expertise around manufacturing and packaging of the product. We also looked at the financial resources we needed for the initial investment, marketing of the product, sales teams and so on.

What I am getting at here is the importance of planning and taking into consideration all aspects of your operational strategy along with the overall business strategy. What this client ended up doing was looking at the essentials of getting the operation underway, taking into consideration that he would develop it in three separate stages and scale the intake of work accordingly.

Through this example, I also want to demonstrate the importance of asking questions of the predicted and or unpredicted growth within your business. Think of the resources you need to allocate to your plans, when and how. For instance, if you are thinking of growing your business through the online world, then how much preparation do you need to allow for? What are the costing? Within the strategy when will you implement the first stage, what ROI are you looking at, and how much capital do you need to raise or allocate from existing funds? In many businesses the owners, buried under an intensive workload, overlook this critical component and then wonder why orders are not being filled or are only partially completed; or they are about to launch a new product through their marketing efforts and find they are short of cash or manpower to service the surge of new business.

No one has a crystal ball, so to minimise your stress plan ahead and set up some key indicators so you can test and measure along the way. This will give you the certainty you need in order to achieve the outcome you want. The reason, I believe, that the operational strategy should take precedence over the marketing is that once you turn on

the tap, if you don't have the right systems set up to catch that business then you'll have it falling through the cracks.

Search for and sustain your 'tribe'

It's hard to sell sand to Arabs or ice to Eskimos. Why? Because they already have heaps of it, although they may be looking for a particular type that they don't have or know they'll need in the future. This is my version of what marketing is all about. Stand out above the rest so your 'tribe' can see you and find out about you. One of my marketing strategies involves searching for my tribe, by which I mean the type of people who might look to come with me on my journey and believe my journey is their journey as well. Now I know that sounds a little out there, so let's break it down.

If you have a business that sells a particular type of product that satisfies a consumer need so they are able to continue and perhaps even enhance their lives and possibly share your product with others, there you have a tribe member who loves your journey, which is the means of sharing your passion with others. Everyone is on some kind of journey, be it spiritual, physical or intellectual. As humans, we are always moving through time. The aging process is the ultimate journey from beginning to end, right?

Your business is also a journey of evolution. We'll cover this further in a later chapter. Your marketing strategy works best when it creates a so-called spotlight in which your business shines brightly. Energy attracts energy, and effectively your tribe is already sold on you because they are looking for you and now, through marketing, you and they can find each other.

When your marketing strategy effectively targets the tribe member your business needs, there's a good chance of getting both of you together. It is amazing when it happens. Speaking personally, there's nothing I love more than when the crowd are really into my message, rather than when I'm presenting at a multi-speaker event where the crowd are into other tribes. It adds a very different dynamic. It is al-

ways easier to deliver the message to people who are already accustomed to either (a) my message or (b) a similar message of positiveness, thought leadership and personal development.

Think about your best tribe members. They're the ones who love what you and your business do. It seems like whatever you offer *fits* them perfectly and arrives at just the right time in their lives. This is what a great marketing strategy produces. Notice how I say 'great' rather than good. Most of these strategies, I believe, are pretty average, including those produced by professional marketers.

No one knows your client, or what you have to offer, better than you do. The tricky part, I find, is that business owners lack clarity on identifying their tribe members and their needs. You may be thinking, I sell paint, all types of paint, and people just buy paint to paint on their stuff. Yes, you're right but people also buy *solutions*, which is just where your paint comes in.

I dare you to try this experiment and let me know if people 'just buy paint' from you. Next time a client comes in tell them that the paint is 50 per cent off for any range they like and then spend the next ten minutes not answering their questions, being rude to them and generally treating them poorly. Let me know how much paint you sell then! You see, people always buy more than just a product or service? They buy a solution. When you find out exactly what this is and offer it to them in a package backed up by obsessively great service and the promise of an ongoing relationship, you gain a tribe member. The secret is to let the tribe know this is what you offer and you're ready to rock!

I know I harp on about high levels of service and transparency. The reason is that the new world of business is going back to being old school, when the butcher knew your name and cut the meat straight off the bone for you, wrapped it individually and helped you carry the bag to the car. If you're lucky enough to be of my vintage you'll under-

stand the difference. Those of you who have only experienced the chain-store butchery — I say sorry!

Marketing strategies can seem really complex to business owners, so I'll try to simplify it using a model I learned from my mentor Matt Church. It uses three components:

1. Message
2. Market
3. Method

Exercise:

Take a sheet of paper and draw the model you see here. If you want a copy, you can also download it from www.UPologybook.com/resources. Below I have included some questions that will help you think clearly to get to the important aspect.

Message

What is your message?

What do you and your business really stand for? What's your passion, your IP (Intellectual Property)?

What does your business sell that is unique?

If it's not unique, then in what way are you different from everyone else? Please don't just say better prices or great service because everyone else says that! This exercise is about stretching you to understand what your essence is.

What is your underlying passion, the fire that excites you about your business/product/service?

What does your best tribe member say they love about you and your business?

If you're clear about what it is you offer, others are drawn to that clarity. It makes it easy for them to say YES!

Market

What is your market for delivery of what your business offers?

All too often, I see business owners looking to advertise their goods in the wrong market. You don't advertise truck parts in a medical journal. Well you could, but I don't think your tribe is hanging out in that space.

Where is this market, and what does it look like?

Is it predominantly online or offline? If, for instance, your tribe is into classic sports cars I believe they'll be found both online and (communicating with each other in chat rooms, forums, searching for parts on other sites, eBay, *Trading Post*) and offline (at car shows, swap meets and the like). Your market is what makes the marketing strategy come alive. Identifying it with clarity simply means casting the right-size net in the right location.

What do your tribe members look like and what are they looking for?

How closely have you been listening to your clients, what they like, their particular needs and traits, and how they like to be served? This is essential information that it makes sense to investigate in depth.

Method

What's their preferred method of purchase and or delivery?

If your business is in the adult toy industry you would be wise to offer discretion. For some people living their entire life in public is cool, but that's a topic for another day. In this industry, though, customers would probably prefer an online purchase and delivery method.

How does your tribe like to be serviced?

If your marketing is to be effective, then it has to cater to *all* your tribes' needs. Let's say you own a retail shop selling bait and tackle to avid anglers. It makes sense that your main method of delivery is direct from the shop and that your tribe is encouraged to pull into the ample parking space out front (for the car and the boat), and that you open early for those heading out for a day's fishing. Interestingly,

there's a growing trend towards buying equipment on the internet, but they still need the store front for all their tackle needs. So the marketing strategy needs to include both platforms for this particular tribe.

Broadcasting a clear message in the right market and catering to your tribe's preferred method of delivery are key marketing elements. I also like using this model every time I'm preparing to release a new program or workshop because it helps clarify my marketing strategy for me. For the business owner studying to become an UPologist, it's essential that you take responsibility for this rather than leaving it to someone else to do it for you. You need to learn about your tribe directly; after all, they're the ones who keep your business door open. Your marketing can be sourced out to the experts for refinement, but the message needs to be formulated authentically by you first!

Set your plan in motion . . . but be prepared to adapt

It's important to condition yourself to the idea that taking responsibility for your action is critical for you to thrive. Mastery is never achieved by leaving the responsibility to others. Within any strategy, careful consideration needs to be given to what type of accountability system you intend to put in place. A strategy can only work if there is ample follow-up, analysis and adjustment. Adjustment is the most essential component.

The hallmarks of any great marketing strategy are research and, most importantly, the ability to evolve according to changing conditions. Time and time again, I see business owners struggle with their marketing because they fail to factor in change. What was valid 12 months ago may now be history. So why keep flogging stuff that people no longer need. Keeping up with the consumer is critical to success.

Your offline and online marketing strategies need not be identical. Your tribe may be global now but their needs will differ depending on many factors, such as geographical location or social environment. I helped a client of mine to develop her online marketing strategy. She

had been struggling with it for some time but getting no traction. When she showed me her design, it was obvious that she wasn't catering to her tribe members who weren't able to come into the retail store. Because her offering is a kinaesthetic, touchy-feely type of product, her online community needed the next best thing — a high volume of imagery and communication they could sink their teeth into, so to speak. Importantly, we began by getting the online tribal community engaged through forums, feedback and interaction. Given that she is in the coffee industry, I only wished we had the ability to use smell in an online interaction — perhaps in the days to come!

I want to emphasise that the initial stages of any transaction are about building rapport and understanding between parties. Once this client had changed the platform, and adjusted her marketing strategy accordingly, she experienced a significant improvement in her marketing and sales results.

Take your time developing all of your strategies, because they are the blueprints for your business moving forward, but remember, everything can be adjusted according to the environment. The blueprints are the designs, but sometimes real-time adjustments are critical. The success of your business may be correlated to the quality of your planning and your capacity to adapt.

The same is true of your personal life strategy. Millions of people around the world are just travelling through life without any planning whatsoever. It's like they are in a bumper car carnival ride. They get nudged around, find themselves going in the wrong direction and crash their way through the ride with little personal control over events. It doesn't mean that every minute of every day needs to be planned or strategised. What I'm talking about is a guiding plan grounded in goals that will allow you to check periodically that you are on the course you set yourself for the year ahead.

Not long ago, I checked on my personal and business goals, and discovered I had completely overlooked some of the targets I had set myself. What I realised was that even though I had written them out

and recorded them I had forgotten to give the list a regular review. This omission brought home to me that for every strategy, regardless of its kind, it is essential that you have a system to keep you on track and focused on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

Many business owners begin the year with a clear set of goals and the best intentions but through no fault of their own end up missing the mark. So I want to give you a tool to help keep you accountable. Think of it like a running tally that you can check each day. It's called a daily activity log and basically it keeps you focused on the task at hand. If you'd like a copy just email me at info@UPologybook.com.

The key to application is consistency, not quantity or even quality, as most people believe. It is the 'doing' on a regular basis. Mastery has its genesis in constant repetition inspired by the quest for perfection.

Through my studies of successful business and personal entrepreneurs I have found a single commonality in the building of success — development. That's right, development. Almost all success is developed over time. Routine is the cornerstone of good strategy, both personal and business. This routine starts when you wake up in the morning and finishes when you lie down to sleep.

For many people routine has a negative, even militaristic ring to it, but I believe routine actually gives you freedom. Because if you know what you are doing on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, and you use your time effectively, then you can find time to fit in exactly what you want to do.

What does your daily routine look like? Are you waking up each day to a shit storm? Either you can have the day you design or, trust me, the day will design something perfectly aligned to the thoughts and emotions you are already experiencing. Have you noticed that if you start the day off poorly you usually end up having a pretty lousy day. The traffic turns into a car park, the internet is down at work, a client is unhappy . . . and the list goes on. I like to call it a 'fire brigade day' — you're constantly putting out fires. It doesn't have to be like this.

One of the major challenges business owners face is time management. Now, I actually feel that time cannot be managed. You need to do the best you can within each 24-hour window. If you're from a different planet please adjust according to your planet's rotational orbit. In the next chapter I want to demonstrate to you how your personal and business strategy can work in unison to allow for a healthy work/life balance, a concept I'll return to later.

There's so much more that could be said about business strategy, but my aim is to give you an overall understanding of strategy in relation to your business as well as your personal life. By beginning the process of developing your business strategy, you are already in front of millions of business owners who don't have one. At least, they may claim to have one . . . except it's all in their head. I'm okay with that, but I wouldn't bet one of my children on it. The more time you spend in the thinking phase of your strategy, the less time you need to spend in the implementing phase. Most business owners seem to have this in reverse. Energy is finite. How much you have and how you decide to expend it is your choice. A crucial part of being an UPologist is living by the following code:

Think first; act or implement second.

Chapter 7: Creating a personal strategy

“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.”

- Winston Churchill

What or who controls us, and our surroundings? I am perpetually on a quest for an answer to this puzzle. And although at times the question becomes more distant and slips beyond my grasp, I believe I am starting to uncover its simplicity. Which lies in the fact that the answer is right in front of us, but we can't see the forest for the trees. Sometimes business owners, me included, forget who is in control of their life. Let me explain.

Are human beings born to live 80 or so years, for no apparent reason, and then, just like that, to leave this world? It would seem a bit pointless, wouldn't it? I'd like to touch on the work of a few of the researchers and teachers around the world I've had the great privilege to spend time with, who include Paul Chek, Wayne Dyer and especially Joe Dispenza, who are shedding new light on what we humans are really designed for and capable of. Dr Dispenza has crossed the gap between the esoteric and the scientific in his books in a fascinating way. Here's an abbreviated version: Humans are made up of cells, which comprise sub-atomic particles, the building blocks of the universe, which are 99.999 per cent energy and 0.0001 matter. So with that knowledge in hand (you can look it up), it makes sense that most of everything is essentially energy.

It is interesting, then, how we have been conditioned to think we are made up of matter, which is in fact only a tiny part of what we are. We are also conditioned to believe (via the memetic structures I first spoke about in chapter 1) that the body and mind are separate, that ultimately thought, and feelings have no bearing on the material world around us. The truth is that every living being, along with everything that has come from a living being, has its own energy signature or vi-

bration. How do you feel when you are happy? Usually, light, full of energy and enthusiasm, right? Things feel good, like you are in harmony with the world. When you are depressed or upset, the opposite applies: you feel heavy, slow and isolated. The same vibrational energy runs through inanimate objects too. I hope you're still with me here!

What I am suggesting is that when our morale is low, for instance when we take a personal or business beating, we believe we are separate from everything around us — we feel disconnected and alone. Interestingly, the recovery process is similar whether the beating is emotional, psychological or physical. Our response reflects our energy level. The stronger the accepted beating (note that I said *accepted*), the longer the recovery period. But if we can break through our very deep-held beliefs and start to consider that we are a part of the rest of the energy around us, we can start to uncover the unlimited possibilities around us. Here's why I am sharing this with you. What would your personal and business strategy look and feel like if you were capable of creating your own future in the same way that everything else around you is created?

The power of the mind

You see, we know that energy cannot be destroyed; it can only change into different forms. One of the foundation principles of this book is the Ouroboros, representing the continuous renewal of self! In other words, not only are you in control of you and your environment. As you are made up the same energy as everything else, you have the capacity to do and be anything you wish.

Now, I know this may sound a little out there but, as we know, the power of the mind is amazing and through scientific research, we are starting to see how, for example, thoughts have the ability to cause physical changes around us. As an UPologist, it is important that you keep an open mind, consider scenarios that you might otherwise tend to question and be prepared to modify your views of the world around you, including yourself. Remember, until not that long ago people be-

lieved the world was flat. All it took was a new perspective. Do your own research into the wondrous field of quantum physics and see for yourself.

My aim is to suggest there are better ways to live, so you can enjoy a happy, healthy successful life and achieve business success. All of this is based on what I have learned over years of study. If you want to know more about this work, you can experience it in my three- to five-day retreats called UPper Limits, which you can see on my site, www.nickpsaila.com.

In developing your personal strategy it is important that you take into consideration four elements that work in harmony and one further component that recent breakthroughs in research suggest plays an incredibly important role in developing human potential — the quantum factor. The goal for your personal strategy is to align and integrate the following components:

1. Mental
2. Emotional
3. Physical
4. Spiritual
5. Quantum.

My view of life is that it is a game for which we don't have all the rules. Perhaps it's this way to make it more interesting, because if you knew everything the game might become a little monotonous. Interestingly, though, too many people just settle for playing a small game.

If you never look within, how will you ever know what's there? So many business owners seem to have lost their ability to see who their true self is. This is usually aggravated by the fact that they are in a constant state of stress. I'm sure you have tried to think clearly in times of elevated pressure. I'm not talking about everyday pressures, such as the hustle and bustle of city life, but financial pressures brought on by cash flow or staffing issues or personal issues relating to home life, relationships or illness, for example. You know what I

mean, the kind of pressure that worries away in the back of your mind like a leaking tap. It's not disturbing you that much, until one day you decide you've had enough and you need to fix it. I'm hoping that for you that day is today.

Over time the accumulated result of this low but constant pressure begins to morph itself into patterns of belief that create a cycle from the mind through to the body in the form of emotion — *e-motion* being energy in motion. You will have experienced this cycle time and time again. What many do then is, rather than 'being present with' or recognising what this emotion is trying to show them, they begin to mask those feelings and they keep pushing through the day as if they weren't happening. Imagine you have a headache that you pay no attention to so it's still there hours later. If you had stopped to think where it might have come from, chances are you would have realised it was signalling that you were dehydrated. If you want more evidence on this, check out the book *The Body's Many Cries for Water* by Dr F. Batmanghelidj. In other words, it's about asking the question, 'What is the symptom trying to tell me?' The body can show us amazing things about our environment and ourselves if we take the time out to figure out how it works.

Our constant disconnection from our emotions then turns into what I call a papier-maché effect, adding layer upon layer of suppressed feelings and thoughts, which in turn has a sort of dumbing down or explosive effect on us.

Humans are multidimensional beings of unparalleled complexity yet we consist almost entirely of energy. And you cannot destroy energy; you can take it or it finds ways to change form. The mind is super powerful and has the ability to do what the dominant thought pattern is programmed to do. So if you keep telling it not to worry about what you're feeling it takes what you say as gospel. I like to call it the genie effect: 'Your wish is my command.' Sooner or later, though, the body may be overwhelmed by other, external forces (think pollution, or lack of use or overuse of the body through exercise, or excessive emotional

fatigue) until the point is reached that the problem begins to reveal itself in the form of physical or mental illness (the two are one really, though we are conditioned to believe they are distinct). Have you ever felt physically sick or experienced pain and your mind says, 'Hey, I'm feeling great, I think I'll write a thesis'? I doubt it! When you're experiencing mental fatigue the last thing you feel like is being creative or running a marathon.

Some of you may be thinking, when I feel stressed, I like to work out so I feel better. And that's exactly the point I'm making: the mind and body are intimately connected. One affects the other implicitly. The key is to begin the process of uncovering your true self, the being within that has the ability to create your future. One of the mechanisms for this connection is using the mind as a tool — this is sometimes called *meditation*.

Plan your personal strategy

I think of meditation as being still and without thought or simply looking within yourself for a time. One meditation I like to use, which my spiritual guru Dr Wayne Dyer calls 'wishes fulfilled', requires 20 minutes, is easy to do and I've found has a great calming effect. Another is a cool app by Mindvalley called Omvana. Regardless of what approach you use, meditation is about regular, consistent practice. Doing things consistently leads to mastery.

This brings me to your personal strategy. How you plan your day and your daily activities influences how you respond during the day. With so many elements involved throughout the day that are a part of doing business, how you respond to each can create a ripple effect. When the person serving you has had a bad day or reacted badly to something that happened earlier, you can end up being on the receiving end of their negative energy, which may display itself as curtness or short temper. No doubt, you have also met people who, regardless of the circumstances, always remain calm and collected. They seem to be better equipped to handle pressure. Ask yourself, how do you handle stressful situations, both mentally and physically? Record your an-

swers and continue the practice until you begin to identify your triggers. You will be surprised by the results.

Here are some tips that winners use routinely and that I myself have tried and tested.

First, as an exercise, look at what wakes you in the morning. Is the sound of your alarm so loud that the neighbours threaten to call the cops? Does it have one of those ear-splitting buzzing sounds that you can only shut off by throwing it across the room? If so, let me tell you what this does to you physically.

The loud noise triggers the release of the hormone cortisol, the same hormone responsible for your 'fight or flight' response. In military parlance, it shocks the body into Def-Con 4, because it thinks you are getting ready for battle. Repeat this on a daily basis and your adrenal glands start to take a beating. Get my drift? Now, if you find it hard to wake I'd be looking at what time and how you go to bed. Your circadian rhythms are set to wake you naturally around sunrise. If you're still in front of your computer or TV screen until the wee hours of the morning, then you can judge the effect.

I suggest waking to some calm, soothing music — perhaps a string quartet. I use the sound of a harp that's programmed into my iPhone. It's easy to listen to and doesn't make me feel like a home invader just kicked the door down. The next step is one of the most vital to your routine, and I will mean the difference between reacting to your day and setting up your day.

For many business owners I know, the first thing they look at is their emails. Through the wonders of technology, you can now have them sent straight to your smart phone. This is cool when you're on the fly or out of the office. Looking at your emails as soon as you wake up isn't so cool. The reason is that more than likely they contain business discussions that involve routine work issues — orders and shipping, quoting, paying an invoice and so on. In effect, you begin the day by

reacting to something, so the rest of the day continues in reaction mode.

Anyone in business knows this feeling. I remember when I used to go on holiday I'd check my emails obsessively and even though I couldn't do much from the remove of another country, I'd still respond to every email and get someone in the office onto it. Worse still, if I were in another time zone I'd stress out for hours until my staff started work. I can see many of you nodding at this. I know some of you will also be thinking, 'But if it's urgent...' Well. You've been sleeping prior to this, unless you were up all night addicted to your email — an emerging symptom of *technology addiction*. When was the last time you checked Facebook?

What I am suggesting is that you leave your computer or phone off for a little while longer. Now, guys like Anthony Robbins call the early morning the 'Hour of Power'. I'm cool with the hour but perhaps not with the whole hype around the 'power' component. Don't get me wrong. I'm not a cruisy type of guy who wakes up in time for a leisurely walk downstairs to the buffet. I like to be springy and I come from the old-school way of thinking that the early bird catches the worm.

My daily routine is always the same, and I recommend it. You start by being still or meditating for 15 to 20 minutes. This time is about getting together with your 'true self'. It's about evolving your understanding of who you are and what your purpose is (we'll return to this later). It is about connecting but even more about visualising your day, your week, your future, and knowing that you have the ability to change energy into any form you wish.

What I like to do is visualise the type of day I want to have. I see myself being happy and inspired in the work I do, meeting interesting people and spending my day peacefully and productively. I see my personal and business goals and work on feeling them emotionally. By this, I mean I search for the same feeling in my day as I have when I feel inspired, happy and grateful. What this does is it begins to align the

mind and body, which has a powerful effect on the energy that makes up your day. If 20 minutes sometimes feels a little challenging, cut it down to 10; it's not the length but the consistency, remember?

Once I've completed my meditation I look at and recite my written goals. This keeps me in check and reminds me what I'm aiming for. From then I like either to go to the gym for a workout (three to four days a week) or to go for a 15- or 30-minute walk with the dog. I usually alternate these. Either way I'm moving my body, circulating air and fluids around the system. If the weather is a restraint, I have an amazing set of exercises that balances the entire body called 'zone exercises' (I'll cover them in chapter 9).

Now I'm ready for a bite to eat and to really start the day. I know all this might sound like it would take hours. Let me assure you it doesn't. Ten to twenty minutes of meditation and visualisation followed by five minutes reading your goals, add a bit of exercise and there you have it. The length is completely up to you. You can choose to make it longer or shorter as long as you fit in the three must-dos.

1. Be still.
2. Visualise your day.
3. Exercise.

The rest is filler. If you need to get business done earlier, the solution is easy. Go to bed a little earlier and wake up earlier. If you tend to go to bed late and wake up at the last minute, *change your routine!* Which do you think will have a better impact on you and your environment — being in reaction mode or being in creation mode?

Please, try it. As with everything here, don't just take my word for it. Test it yourself, measure your results and record your progress. It takes around 60 to 90 days to create a habit.

Now you have your day set up, and you know the power of the mind, it's time we took a look at your emotional strategy. How do you deal with your emotions, and what can you interpret from them? Contrary

to the traditional hard-nosed business teaching from past three decades, entrepreneurs today are beginning to understand that emotion is a critical component of doing good business. Putting yourself in the customer's shoes can give you a competitive edge, especially when communicating with your tribe. Are you starting to get the picture? Everything you think, do and feel directly, correlate with the business you operate. UPology is about finding balance and understanding when you are swinging too far in either direction. Being in touch with yourself and your business performance provides the indicators to guide you through the journey.

Harness your emotions, and then use them wisely

Perhaps the greatest human mystery lies in the chemical changes that take place within the body. They trigger processes that at times baffle us. Why do we feel the way we do when the environment and even our own thought patterns seem to be completely out of line with our emotions? I believe emotions indicate our own unique interpretation of the energy within us. Every emotion we experience is like a fingerprint, unique to us. People say, 'I know how you feel', but mostly they seem to be not even close to hitting the mark.

So it's important to take the time to reflect on what these amazing communication patterns are trying to tell us. We receive signals either from our external environment (*watch out, the stove is hot or the traffic light is red*) or internally because of a flood of hormones through the body. Have you noticed that every time you experience an emotion, regardless of type, environment or time, accompanying it is a set of thoughts? Usually these thoughts are consistent. They accompanied an event in the past, when last you felt that emotion. The emotion of *fear* comes with a trigger — a thought or memory of an event in your past when you experienced the chemical change interpreted as fear. As time goes by, the memory fades somewhat, but the trigger remains.

For business owners the highs and lows of emotion, if not analysed calmly, can create havoc, consciously or unconsciously. The key is to interpret what the emotion is seeking in you. Can you for a moment

suspend thought and open yourself to possibility? Could it be that emotion is an internal communication system driven from beyond thought that can help guide you, that is so powerful that it changes the physical makeup of our biological system? And that it does this so precisely that with all our technology we cannot even begin to replicate the finesse of this system?

Emotions have the ability to change decisions that moment before we were adamantly convinced we would make. They can change our mood in an instant from hostility through to warm affection, from joy to anger and from doubt to certainty. Thus, the power of thought combines with this force within us.

Emotions are a sensory mechanism like no other that have served us well since before we stood upright. Societal conditioning encourages us to bury our feelings. This is equivalent to driving one of those 100-tonne tip trucks they use in the mines, with a blindfold, on at 100 km per hour. Let me be clear here. I don't mean that you let your emotions control the day, laughing one minute and crying the next, or making decisions based on unexplored feelings. Mastery, one of the pillars in the UPology methodology, is about exploring the inner self and linking this to the outer environment.

Emotion is a tool that needs to be understood to be used to its capacity. Your body's own *intuition* has all the answers you need. You just have to ask the right questions and look within to interpret the answer. How you 'feel' points to what is going on at a conscious and subconscious level. As an example, you have doubtless been in a sales situation where you were certain the sale was going to go through — until, at the last moment, the customer unexpectedly turned around and said, 'No, we want to think about it'. Your mind was positive, you were focused, and you believed you had done everything to expedite the transaction and then, boom — you were thrown a curve ball. In that, instant you may have had an emotion that was not influenced by your thought patterns: a sense of rejection. Its chemical makeup was decided by your experiences of rejection earlier in your life. In almost

all cases of business owners I have dealt with in similar scenarios, the answer was unanimous. They felt that they were somehow to blame, that they had done something wrong, even that the customer was rejecting them personally.

Do you see what I'm getting at here? There are millions of sales people in business around the world who are scared to sell because they fear a sense of rejection, an emotion that arises every time someone rebuffs their sales approach. In business, this is crippling. When it happens repeatedly, it creates a pattern of belief that embeds a negative memetic structure. Emotion influences mindset and vice versa. The mind and body are uniquely connected through emotion.

Here is a challenge: record the emotions you experience throughout the day in different scenarios in and outside of business. I guarantee that you will start to uncover patterns that will continue to be repeated until such time as the emotions are understood and dealt with. What is that emotional pattern attempting to show me? Why am I feeling this way about myself? Could those emotions be showing me the disconnect or the pathways of discrepancy between my mind and body? Until this emotion is dealt with it keeps coming back as if to say, 'Hello, I'm still here, we need to get this sorted'.

I was in sales for more than 10 years and had this same scenario play out repeatedly, until one day I figured it out. I told myself that 'no' meant 'no to this particular sale'; it didn't attach to me personally. Think about it. There may have been many reasons why they decided not to buy. But this decision has triggered taught patterns in you and a one-size-fits-all reaction (based on your response to something that happened long ago in your past), so conjuring up the emotion of rejection.

I am now almost free from this emotion when it comes to sales. I look at it like the weather. There are too many possible scenarios for why my prospects may feel they are not ready to progress. So now, I approach sales with new eyes and feelings. I actually look forward to the

process, as it allows me to feel and see the change in *me*. I study the topic and make sure I am doing my best (as only my personal best will do), and then I let flow take it from there, the flow that comes from years of working towards mastery.

My aim here is to demonstrate what can come from observing your internal as well as the external environment in business. Once you have worked on understanding what your emotions are expressing, you have the ability to harness and use them wisely. You can put them into practice. Making a decision should involve emotion. Using your emotion as a barometer is the key. When your mind and body align with your thoughts and emotion, you feel confident, alert and certain. Leadership decisions within your business, recruitment of personnel, purchasing decisions and the like all need to be congruent with your emotion.

The importance here is that decisions you make are grounded in research and an abundance of data, while your emotions contribute to how you feel about making the decisions or presenting the scenario. In recruiting, if you have researched the candidate, done your due diligence, and you feel he or she is the right person, and if all this is lined up, then you are much better positioned to make a good decision. A gut feeling is not enough; this is not to say it isn't important because it is, but first you need facts and research. As an UPologist, you use the best of what's available to you. The more you practise this, the more *instinctual* it becomes.

Have you ever watched base jumpers? Everyone around them looks at this sport as highly dangerous, even crazy, but to the jumpers themselves it's safe. Why? They have understood what their emotion of fear is expressing and how to work with it and focus its energy — along with practice, practice and more practice, because, as Anthony Robbins puts it, 'we can condition any behaviour if we do it with enough repetition and emotional intensity'. Add to the mix the mental training of a Formula 1 driver. Now it becomes an instinctual flow!

On the importance of daily rituals

Having a personal strategy is the way of the UPologist. To wander aimlessly, with no idea of what to reach out for next, creates too much space for self-doubt and negativity, which can have a snowball effect. No clear direction means no sense of purpose. Daily rituals, on the other hand, are a great tool for ensuring you stay committed, focused and in flow.

Research shows that in athletes, mental practice, creating strong neural pathways through daily visualisations, can be as beneficial as physical practice. So it is important to understand how to utilise the best daily rituals to help strengthen your neural pathways. Once mind and body have assimilated your objective, less effort is needed, to complete the task — it becomes second nature.

It is critical that you work on creating daily rituals in your life. Why do I use the term *ritual* rather than *routine*? A routine is '*a sequence of actions regularly followed*'. A ritual is '*a ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order*'. Their meaning is close, but not the same. 'Ceremony' suggests a celebration with ancient roots, handed down through generations; 'prescribed order' is also significant. As you will have gathered by now, I'm obsessed with identifying the differences between the choices we face. Some look almost identical, though under scrutiny we may find they are worlds apart. I chose 'daily ritual' because I felt it helps set you up for exceptional rather than everyday achievement.

You can put many daily rituals together. But what I will introduce you to is a morning and night that I teach my business-coaching clients and have also assimilated myself. A daily ritual is a part of the journey towards mastery. It provides a foundation or building block, becomes a part of you and is as important as anything in your life is. I will lay out the structure I use in the next chapter, which focuses on mastery. It begins with mastery of oneself, looking within and then outside the self. From there everything else follows, but in order to formulate a daily ritual you must first understand the choices you need to make.

Too many business owners view personal time as time they steal while taking a shower or on the toilet, rather than as a part of their growth as an entrepreneur. The debate around work/life balance has no doubt been around for as long as business has. I suggest you have the choice to look at this question in a different way. I don't know where it was written that you can't have a successful business and a life at the same time. I'm here to tell you, *you can!*

The power is in your hands. You can have the business you want; you simply have to design and plan it and then figure out how to get it. Sounds simple, right? Well it really is. Now I know you're thinking, well I'd like to work four hours a week and make millions a year! The answer is *you can*. There are people doing it now. Timothy Ferriss wrote an entire book on it: *The 4-Hour Workweek*. It just means you need to:

- A. Make a decision you want to work four hours per week.
- B. Ask what you need to do or learn in order to work for just four hours per week
- C. Do it!

See, that's it! The hard part is making the decision. Everything else flows from there. So having a work/life balance is the wrong way to look at it. I look at it as life/work balance. For me, life is number one and work is number two. When you put them in this order, automatically your mind starts to think differently and your perception changes. You now have life first and your business is there to help. This is simply about making a decision to put yourself first, and to give yourself permission to make time in your day for your daily rituals. Without them, balance is hard to attain. Most business owners overlook balance, which is the most important part of the equation. It is one of the foundational principles of this book — the yin and yang of life and business. One without the other is impossible, or rather, it is possible but it won't last. Too much work and not enough play and you'll burn out. Too much play and not enough work and you'll eventually be living on the streets. Everything is about balance.

The power in putting life in front of work is that now you have the strategy for what type of business will suit your chosen lifestyle. Often business owners have no daily rituals, don't ask the right questions and/or never consider the strategy they need. 'Work smarter, not harder.' That's it. When you put life first, you value your time and the efforts you contribute daily; you learn the ritual of working smarter.

The business owners I have worked with never seem to ask themselves the question, How much is my time worth? If they did they would notice that generally it's less than you would earn in a job. Once you decide to turn the equation on its head and begin the process of building the neural pathways we've spoken about in this chapter through visualisation, language and emotional congruence, you will start to see and experience the change within you and the external environment.

I remember working with some clients who had put in seven days a week for years. I went through an exercise with them in which we looked at what their hourly rate was, and then everything else that was important in their life. The outcome reduced them to tears. They realised that what was most important in the work/life equation (spending time with themselves, their kids and their spouses) would always be out of reach. In their words, 'Nick, work comes first, then if we have any time left we can spend it with the family — they understand'. When I asked where this invisible hurdle originated they admitted that both their fathers had worked till they dropped, as had *their* fathers before them. Isn't it interesting what a memetic belief can do? That's the way it has always been.

The cherry on top for me was that after personal reflection, and a decision to change, they began the process of developing a daily ritual. And within 90 days they had reduced their work week to five and a half days while also increasing their revenue by sourcing better clientele, who fitted into their new way of looking at their life/work balance. The power of choice is unparalleled. They now look to spending time with family on weekends and during the week, and finding

time for themselves every day as well. Business now fits into life perfectly. It is about organisation and spending your time wisely.

Strategy, be it personal or business, is fundamental to your path towards *evolution*, which by no coincidence is the final pillar in the UPology methodology. Look around you and you will see that all the great achievers of our time have had their own particular strategy. You will also find that all of them have followed rituals that they assimilated into their everyday life.

UPology is about an evolution of my being, forged by taking a beating, making a choice, a shifting mindset and daily ritual. It is through this process that I have arrived at where I am now. Through my pursuit of continued education and development, I continue to master the skills of understanding what all evolved beings understand, the knowledge of which allows them to see time not as linear, with past or future, but only *now* — what you choose to be in the present moment. Mastery, as we'll see in the following chapter, is the process of attaining this state of being. First, you must free yourself from YOU!

Chapter 8: The road to mastery

“Only one who devotes himself to a cause with his whole strength and soul can be a true master. For this reason, mastery demands all of a person.”

- Albert Einstein

It's important to start with this question: What is mastery? One dictionary definition offers: 'comprehensive knowledge or skill in a subject or accomplishment'. I think the person who wrote this perhaps wasn't on the mastery path. I believe it is so much more than this. It is a lifetime quest to find the inner self, the essence of purity in self-expression in whatever art form you choose. Unlearning everything you think you know is the first step towards mastery.

For the UPologist, the art form you choose doesn't have to correspond to the stereotypical platforms you have been delegated. Most people think art always has to be 'right brain'–driven creativity in the form of fine art, music, dance and the like. For me it doesn't make sense that we look only at what's in the box; this is too restrictive. Mastery of self-expression is much more than that. Business and the craft of doing business can be as much an art as sculpture. The path to mastery is exactly that — a *path*. Self-expression, the purity of being what we are, is not limited to one form or another; it may be expressed through whatever we choose to focus our energy on.

The stronger our desire and the more targeted the energy, the purer our self-expression will be. I have had the privilege of meeting some amazing passionate business people. For them, the quest to run a successful business and to share what they do with others is overwhelming. They are alive with an energy that yearns to express itself and to be in flow, to be in the zone! They are on the mastery quest. It's what connects them to their purpose.

For the UPologist, therefore, mastery has many forms, because it's about commitment to what you feel passionate about. If you are ob-

sessed with a sport or a hobby, you have often discovered it is so much more than you see on the surface. Many see only what they choose to see or what their limited perspective allows them to see. A former business partner of mine summed it up perfectly: 'If all you have is a hammer, everything else looks like nails.'

Mastery is about understanding; that the more you learn, the greater your quest for knowledge becomes. It is also a path to freedom. By freedom, I'm talking about seeking to control your mind. To be in control of your thoughts and have the freedom to be *you* is the essence of mastery.

I've always pondered on this: it seems like my whole life I have searched for the meaning of *what I am*. I feel this inner presence or life force starting slowly to unveil itself. It has been there all along and will always be there, but the only way for it to show itself is through the process of attaining mastery. Don't mistake this for 'perfection'. I don't think we can be perfect. However, I do believe we can attain high levels of mastery.

At times, the incredible force/energy that lies within wants to experience all of what is called 'the human experience', even though it is so much more and words can never adequately describe it. On my ongoing journey, it seems to me that mastery creates another level of self-expression. When you are expressing your passion and purpose, your mind and body align perfectly with the universal energy or GOD (the Grand Organized Design). The sensation is of being weightless; time is of no importance. I want you to begin to understand this power of mastery and all its parts.

The attitude of gratitude

Coming back to this writing after a few weeks spent attending interesting workshops and meeting amazing people has allowed me to mark another step on my evolutionary path and in the practice of mastery. At every step there is so much to learn and experience. I have had

the great experience of refreshing concepts that I began to examine years ago.

What I love about the journey I am on is that it constantly highlights nuggets of information that were there all along. You have a recurring sense of *déjà-vu* — you know, the feeling you've been here or done this before. Only now does the knowledge or experience come to life, giving you that 'ah-ha' moment. The longer you follow the mastery path, the more often these sparks of life come to fruition.

Ask yourself, 'How much have I really absorbed of what I have learned along the way?' and, 'Am I being open and aware of what the energy within me is trying to express in me?'

The longer your quest for mastery, the more *in touch* you become. When you are in tune with whom, what and where you are, amazing opportunities begin to surface. Being aware as a business owner is a great gift, yet another vital tool for you to use in everyday business as well as your personal life.

In chapter 1, I spoke about how you must first understand 'the glass' (being yourself) in order to get a perspective on whether it's half empty or half full. By now, I hope you are beginning to understand more of yourself. Depending on your perspective, your attitude towards life brings either opportunity or a sense of incarceration. Many business owners are dominated by the 'scarcity' attitude. It's all about the money, which is all they know. Why? This is because their experiences and study of mastery are non-existent. Moreover, the shittier their day begins, the shittier it continues. It's like they become a magnet for Murphy's Law: whatever could go wrong will go wrong. Most business owners prepare for the worst and go through their days experiencing the worse. Hence the incarceration of the mind, body and spirit.

Do you see how a shift in attitude can drastically change the way you experience the world around you, be it personal or business? The study of mastery allows you to experience the quality of life, the good

and the bad, the yin and yang. As you read this book, you are encouraged to make a decision as to which field that you want to play in. You can choose to live behind bars (by which I mean the mental bars we bring to our experience) or to be 'in flow'. All roads will eventually lead us back to Rome. The journey is the difference. I believe heaven and hell are between our ears. We choose for ourselves.

Now, I know some of you may be thinking, 'I don't *choose* a fatal illness or a nasty break-up or an amazing prosperous life!' But whether you see it or not, you do have the power to change the characters, the settings and the outcome of your life movie at every step of the way. (More on this in the next chapter.)

This is why the study of an UPologist centres on having an *attitude of gratitude*. A beating will often block the flow towards mastery. The reason for this is it shifts your attitude, with gratitude displaced by resentment, blame, justification and excuse — what I call the 'poor me' or victim mentality. To recall my sister's wise words, 'You can either get busy dying or get busy living.' It's your call. Whatever shows up, there's always a positive way you can experience it. The key is to judge for yourself how much energy you want to invest in that experience. The less skilled in mastery you are, the bigger deal you will make of everything, be it positive or negative. I'm sure you've met business owners who carry on about something that yielded a negative outcome for their business — but happened *years ago*! Yet they return to it repeatedly. The same holds true for the opposite. I'm not saying that you become emotionless about your experiences. What I'm highlighting is that mastery of self brings you to a place where you have control over your thoughts and feelings at all times. To yearn, to mourn or even to revel is no longer necessary.

Let me be clear here. Death will inevitably bring about a period of grieving, which will vary according to the closeness of the relationships involved. However, a prolonged mental and emotional state of mourning may be minimised. Imagine for a moment that you knew Nirvana awaited us all at the end of the game called Life. Would you

mourn the loss of your loved ones or would you rejoice for them, knowing they were going to a better place? Is this truly so hard to imagine? Your journey towards mastery is about life in the moment and connection to the higher self that you know that life is a continuum — it changes but it does not start and stop.

When you have an attitude of gratitude and acceptance of the now, business transforms itself. The universe, with all its wonders, opens to you. It may often do so in the subtlest way; nevertheless, the signs will be apparent.

Use your intuition — and harness the power within

On your quest for knowledge and self-development your path leads to an incredible range of choice that you may never even have considered in the early stages of the journey towards mastery. Why? This is because it was beyond your consciousness, waiting for the right time and event, the exact moment when you needed it. I know this may sound a little weird, but trust me on this. I'll speak more about it in the next chapter. Some things will happen repeatedly — until the right time, when you actually *get it*. Check in with your history and stored memories or step out and look back at yourself from the outside, just for a second. Examine your past relationships, your business deals and the directions you have chosen, and more than likely you will find that you have been down this path already, maybe not exactly the same scenario but perhaps the same outcome.

There is a powerful guidance system within us, which is designed for us to live like the GODs we are. (In saying this, it's not my intention to offend anyone; regardless of your faith I hope you interpret the Grand Organized Design as what works for you!) Through the process of attaining mastery you may or may not uncover your personal *in-tuition*, the inbuilt educational guidance system specifically designed for you to give you the very best of everything you want or need to experience. This intuition can be accessed only by looking inward and connecting with the transformative unit called emotion or feelings. Emotion, as I shared earlier in the book, is energy in motion, the ener-

gy that swells inside you. You know the feelings: when you are embarrassed, the blood rushes to your face; when you are scared, the acidic feeling in your stomach. This is intuition transcribing itself to something you can experience with your senses.

Through the practice and experience the quest for mastery brings you are able to get in touch with this amazing system and begin to use it to guide you towards decisions that are right for you. You'll have noticed, I didn't say you need to *learn* how to use intuition. You already know. It's fundamentally who you are already, the GOD within you. Everything you'll ever need is there for you, and no need to change the batteries either. It's an unlimited source.

So why is it that so many people are unaware of the power within them? One reason is that they are so attached to the material surroundings that they allow their EGO (Edging GOD Out, through an uncontrolled mind and emotion) to believe it's in charge. They believe, in other words, that the tail is wagging the dog. The more you believe this, the more embedded the idea becomes. In business, this is demonstrated by indecision, procrastination, casting blame and making excuses to justify poor performance. Rather than trusting yourself, you get into this crazy relationship with yourself, similar to falling in love with your oppressor or captor. There are many recorded studies of this phenomenon. The result does never know what is coming next, whether pain or praise. It's as though you're sailing a boat without a rudder. The more you allow EGO to take control, the more disconnected or scattered you will feel, act and be in your life.

You may have noticed that by ignoring your intuition you generally end up with the reverse of the outcome you were seeking — a deal that went wrong, a relationship that went south, or an investment you knew was wrong but greed or outside pressure got the better of you. Every signal you received you just paper-marched until you couldn't feel your intuition anymore or, even worse, you began to persuade yourself that these signals were just a figment of your imagination and were not to be relied on. In effect, you switched the system onto

standby mode — not off, by the way, because in cases of danger it will always cut in automatically.

It's okay, though, it's always there for you. All you have to do is learn to get in touch with how it works. It's like that eighties TV series *The Greatest American Hero*. (If you're too young to remember it, check it out on YouTube.) The main character finds a superhero suit but doesn't understand how to use it as there are no instructions with it. He spends a lot of time crashing through walls and falling off stuff until he begins to understand through trial and error what the suit is capable of. The same happens on our quest for mastery. This is why it's so important to condition ourselves constantly until we become unconsciously competent. Situations that might once have felt awkward or a big deal now is simply stages on the journey that can be dealt with easily in the knowledge that everything is about making our vision a reality.

Steve O, an Olympic beach volleyball coach, shared a story with me that I feel is apposite here. He said that as his athletes work on their personal development and mastery, he notices a shift in their mindset as well as their actions and interactions to everything and everyone that comes their way. The shift in perspective reveals itself at this elite level in two ways: they see every opponent they face as part of their journey to winning Gold at the Olympics, and they see everyone and everything as designed precisely to teach them or help them master their emotions and mindset.

The difference is that other athletes who are not at this level tend to look at each game or opponent as separate from their journey to Gold; they have the attitude of them and us. Can you see the subtle shift? In the first instance, the athletes are saying that, win, lose or draw, it's all part of a bigger picture and that their opponents are there to help them to learn. In the second, the non-mastered athletes look at each event as a unique competition separate from the journey. When they lose they often beat themselves up and switch on the EGO, effectively losing control of their thoughts and emotions.

I thought that was an awesome way to share the values of mastery by a coach of three Olympic Gold medal teams over 12 years plus.

I want now to share with you how you can begin the reconditioning process of getting in touch with yourself. *Reconditioning* means exactly that: returning yourself to greatness and to being in flow. You see, you've never been without this capacity. As we go through life, many of us simply push it aside, rejecting the idea that we are part of a bigger picture. Most business owners I have spoken with admit that at times they feel isolated, alone, that no one understands what they are going through or what they have to deal with.

The word *alone* might equally suggest 'all one' — that we are all part of the one constant energy source that is greater than we could ever imagine. Remember, our experience is limited only by the five senses, yet there is much more we can perceive. Getting up from a beating isn't just about using your legs, it's about reconnecting with your *intuition*. Note the difference between *alone* and *lonely*. Many people are lonely because they simply can't stand being alone. UPologists, on the other hand, often love being alone. They are never lonely because they are happy in their own skin.

Here's an exercise that's designed to help you to feel the energy moving through you and for you and to be in tune with your 'inner tuition'. Trying to figure it out with the intellect is using the wrong tool. I spoke earlier about using the mind. This is the complete opposite; it's the feeling and trusting part of the equation.

1. Start by sitting in a quiet spot with your arms resting gently in your lap.
2. Take a few breaths in and out and completely relax, allowing yourself to go limp.
3. Close your eyes and turn your awareness inward, listening to your breathing.
4. Ask yourself, 'Can my inner self show me the energy for yes?'
5. Ask yourself, 'Can my inner self show me the energy for no?'

6. Sit and begin to feel the rising or sinking sensation of a warm energy, and just be still with it and experience where this is for you.
7. Repeat the process and notice the subtle shift in energy. This is your guiding 'inner tuition' or intuition.

For me, when I ask for a yes, I get the feeling of energy rising up to my chest, neck and face; when I ask for the no, I feel the warm energy down in my legs. Please note, it isn't like you have just switched on the hair dryer; it is a more subtle warmth that is loving and perfectly designed for you, as an awareness or a *knowing*.

This inner intelligence can be used in business as well. It usually manifests itself as a gut feeling — either a negative feeling of 'this doesn't sit right with me' or a positive feeling of being inspired and excited about an excellent project or a good decision.

It's important to understand that this intuition should not be used as an excuse for not doing the due diligence and groundwork that is necessary in business. The key to mastery is to do the work, not sit there and hope for the best. Your intuition is there to guide you to the perfect decision for you, drawing on an unconscious energy that is concerned only for your welfare.

Repetition, discipline . . . and refinement

There are many faces to mastery, only a few of which I'll cover here. The one common thread I see in all forms of mastery is the repetition, the essential requirement of doing a task repeatedly. Boring is what happens when you do something repeatedly and don't enjoy it; mastery is when you do enjoy it. I was looking up some stats on the great Olympic swimming champion Ian Thorpe (Thorpedo), and I was amazed by the level of his dedication to mastery. His training regime would humble the best of athletes, but what I really noticed was the volume of repetition and most importantly his 'over-delivery' in training, by which I mean the extent to which he went 'above and beyond' any reasonable limits.

Elite athletes demonstrate this in many ways. For Thorpe, the above and beyond in the physical sense means he hit the pool every morning to do lap after lap, improving technique, heart rate, focus and so on. The longest race he participated in was the 400 metres; his specialty was the 100 metres, so he's swimming very fast, and he swims at least 100 km per week in training — or about 2000 laps. I don't know about you but I'm hard-pressed to complete 200 metres!

Such exceptional feats are found throughout the business and sporting worlds. In business, it's not necessarily measured by how many hours you expend. Millions of business owners invest ridiculous numbers of hours but their productivity remains low. What I'm referring to here is the 'over and above' levels of personal commitment and business development that are standard levels of practice for successful entrepreneurs. As you continue your journey towards mastery, you will begin to notice that the further into your personal and business development you are the easier concepts, tasks and strategies become.

The same is true for elite athletes. They no longer find it hard just to play the sport; the process they engage with is *refinement*.

When you first start working in a new area, perhaps in sales or planning or shopfront marketing, accomplishing anything feels hard, or 'out of flow'. The more you do it, the easier it becomes, until it becomes second nature, mimicking a natural process. The main reason why athletes like Ian Thorpe train beyond their limits is to condition themselves to break through their own barriers. The other reason is that they condition their body for the task until it becomes second nature. In business, too we need to condition ourselves for it to become second nature.

I want to share with you a story of a good friend of mine, Stephen Bock, whose story is a perfect example of what the path to mastery can hold for you.

You can do extraordinary things — you just have to start!

I've had the great pleasure of becoming good friends with an ordinary Australian who has embraced the UPology philosophy of making a decision and drawing the best out of any situation.

After taking a beating in the form of a lengthy and tough separation, Stephen had come to a crossroads where it was time to make a decision on what the next phase of his life was going to look like. Was he going to stay in the same place physically, mentally, financially and emotionally? He felt stagnant, overweight and unhappy. Or was he going to make a decision that would change his life forever?

Stephen made the decision to break out of his comfort zone and face his fears. Sometimes your greatest fear as an entrepreneur is of watching the world go by while you languish in your comfort zone. I call it the *shell effect*. You become a shell of the person you used to be. Everything becomes harder; you make excuses and, worst of all, you begin to settle for second best, telling yourself it's okay to be average.

But Stephen is not average. He has inside him what we all have in us. It's simply a matter of choice whether we awaken that spirit or keep it under lock and key, buried beneath the conscious mind of excuse, blame and self-justification. At that point in his life (around four years ago) he decided to stand up and be counted, to change his circumstances. He wanted to turn his lifetime dream into reality. He made the conscious and, more importantly, the subconscious decision to climb Mount Everest.

Now, I'm not sure if you are aware of what it takes to climb 'the hill', as he calls it, though I would suggest you look at the impossible and multiply it by a thousand. I didn't realise the enormity of the feat until I saw him present his story and then did my own research. I recommend you check it out.

Having made his decision, Stephen begins to train and raise the funds to undertake the expedition. He is 10 months out and there is only a limited window in which to get this done. At this point Stephen is 20 kg overweight and out of shape, and emotionally battered after his separation.

Here is where the champion comes into play, the inspiration whose potential is inside all of us as human beings. He understands that he needs other specialists around him who can help turn this dream into reality. In a short time, he gathers a team of like-minded, focused experts to map out his path for the expedition. The beginning of anyone's decision to take their business or personal life to the next level is to understand their strengths and their limitations. Important too is who they surround themselves with. This isn't the time for pride or saying I don't need anyone's help. It's about setting up the right environment both internally and externally.

Training begins at 4.30 every morning, rain, hail or shine, and continues for the next 10 months. Now I'm going to summarise the process as much as I can so I ask you to open your mind and imagination. The training phase that Stephen and his team developed had a unique twist. I'm going to use Stephen's exact words here: 'Nick, the training started here. We applied gaff tape to our mouths at the gym to simulate altitude breathing [on Everest the air is one-third its density at sea level]. Then once we were fatigued beyond exhaustion and throwing up the training began.'

He only really came to appreciate this once he was on the path to the summit. He continued: 'I realised after the 10 months' training that what our coach was doing was actually training our minds to go beyond what we actually thought we could do. This was one of the best things that the coach could have done for us, as when you are on the hill 'she' [Everest] will only allow you there if she feels you are worthy and respectful to her.'

The point I'm hoping you take from this is that as you undertake your mastery journey you begin to see how mind and body are conditioned to work in harmony with each other. After 60 days of going up and down, acclimatising to the conditions and the harsh external environment, Stephen reaches, the final push — a 36-hour non-stop, no-sleep, no-food battle for survival, literally alone and with only himself and his own mind to navigate the terrain and continue UPwards. He is on the edge of space, looking down on the planet. The feeling he experiences is out of this world. When he reaches the summit, he becomes the 61st Australian to climb Mount Everest. 'Stephen Bock No. 61', as he is now known. He had ever made the most incredible, life-changing journey.

Everyone has their own Everest to climb, whether in business or in their personal life, their health or their relationships. My sister's personal Everest was coping with family tragedy and financial and health crises. What we do with our Everest is what counts. Life always puts them in front of us to climb. Either you can let it overtake you or you can conquer it. What I want you to take away from this is that once Stephen made a decision to change his situation, he also made the decision that is pivotal in the journey of an UPologist — that regardless of the difficulties, non-completion was not an option. I don't like to use the word *failure*. I believe there is no failure, only a different perspective. What I have learned in conversations with Stephen is that his Everest wasn't really the mountain; it was raising himself to the next level of thinking, responsibility and, most importantly, accountability. It was his ability to take a beating and get back up. To look at this as a gift and a part of the perfect journey forward. He shared with me that the partner he was with at the time once asked him, 'What happens if you don't reach the summit?' Without hesitation, his response was, 'You don't understand. This isn't a "what if" scenario. I'll keep going until I do it or I die'. In mastery, your determination must be unwavering.

Another key takeaway I want to share with you is that Stephen visualised himself doing what he set out to do. The decision was the

beginning and the end for him. Throughout the organisation process, the focus is on completion. Not only did he see himself on the summit, but he also saw himself off the summit and completing this epic journey. The descent, I learned, is more dangerous than the ascent. With body and mind fatigued beyond exhaustion, your concentration levels need to be on high alert.

One of the major reasons for businesses going under is that the owners lose sight of what they set out to accomplish. Another reason is that fatigue of body and mind reach beyond exhaustion. Do you see why mastery of self is as important as mastery of the business? You are like an athlete in training. The same elements are in play — long hours, race days, invisible hurdles and summit expeditions. How can you do this successfully if you haven't made the decision that non-completion is not an option and continued to develop your training to deal with what's ahead?

In order to accomplish a desired outcome you need to condition yourself in a sequenced manner that can be measured and tested along the way.

Conditioning: continued effort with focus is critical; loving it is essential

Conditioning is about bringing something to life or into a desired state, whether it's a piece of furniture or an automobile, or the human mind, body and spirit. In reality, spirit has always been there, shining; it's just that more than likely you weren't looking. The game is played that way, the game being life as a humanoid. We are becoming less human being and more human *doing*. Have you noticed? That's why I say *humanoid*. It's a form of human that is detached from the truth of what we really are, this unparalleled universal force.

Most people today think that conditioning is about fitting in with what society dictates, or should I say what the powers-that-be tell us — fashion or music pre-Madonna, or the political system, or the sex industry and everything associated with it. Unfortunately, people are

conditioned to believe that all this is their reality and, even worse, their truth. I can't tell you how many people I have counselled actually think that sex is love, or that having sex like a porn star or looking like a supermodel is a route to acceptance.

Conditioning can take many forms, whether you are conditioning your mind and body, someone, or something is conditioning you through embedding memetic structures.

The key is to recognise what is going on around you, be it in business or in your personal life. Once you discover that the path to happiness isn't external but internal, then you have begun your awakening.

As an UPologist, you condition your mind and body to work harmoniously, to recognise and feel the environment around you, to be aware with your senses and use your inner tuition. Once you are conditioned, you begin to realise that the truth is more than what you had thought. The construct that has been laid down before you isn't what you have to adhere to. You have the freedom to change that into whatever you wish.

Conditioning runs deep in us. Most people still think we are shaped by genetics and if your ancestry had a defective gene then you're doomed. Completely healthy women have elected to undergo a double mastectomy because of a strong family history of cancer. Constructs like science that humans have created in search of external answers keep coming up short in areas that pertain to human health. How many billions of dollars have been and are still being spent on medical research with little progress. I do not mean to offend anyone, nor is it my intention to justify my thinking here. It is simply a point of view.

Every one of us is an individually changing organism that is influenced by our internal and external environment. This is why your business is so interconnected with you. The health of the business usually directly correlates with the level of health you have achieved mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. If, for instance, you have conditioned

yourself to the idea that your business is doomed, if you feel hopeless and everyday is a struggle, I can pretty much guarantee you that this internal thinking pattern will be matched by what your external environment looks like.

Conditioning is a two-way street. It can work for the greater good or for your destruction. The key is to recognise what is happening by looking within and keeping in check with your environment. The vast majority of business owners I know, and I have worked with tend to ignore what both internal and external environments are trying to show and tell them.

Recently, when I was presenting a keynote, I asked over 30 business owners, 'How many of you can tell me what your weekly breakeven point is? And please be honest.' The response didn't surprise me in the slightest, although it did wake up a few people in the audience. Out of the entire room, only two people raised their hand.

Next, I asked, 'How many of you have been in business for longer than two years?' The vast majority raised their hands. So I concluded with the obvious question: 'Why, then, don't you know your breakeven figure?' One participant had the courage to reply, 'I don't really understand how to calculate this', while another said, 'I leave that to my accountant. I look after my business and he does the books'.

Can you see what's happening here? Can you see how this is a conditioned response that is holding these business owners back? The fundamentals of business require certain levels of knowledge that you simply must take control over. This is one of those fundamentals. Conditioning of the mind is the first piece of the puzzle; the next is conditioning yourself to the basics of business to the point of unconscious competence, as we spoke about in the previous chapters. These basics relate to finances, business strategy, marketing and sales, and the art of negotiation.

Only when you are awake can you see that everyone else is sleeping.

Most of your life you are either conscious of your decisions or very oblivious to what your environment is attempting to demonstrate to you. Certain situations and crises in life afford you opportunities to learn that you would never otherwise have had.

Take people who are on the road to obesity, not through illness but through carelessness. They are on course to eat themselves to oblivion. Eventually this type of conditioning leads to a point in their lives that forces them to make a decision. I call it the pain junction, a crossroads in your life where the decision you make is going to affect you into the future. People who are eating themselves to death are sleepwalking. They have conditioned themselves to believe that this is their reality; it's just the way it is. The game looks and feels perfectly real. This is their set path and there's nothing they can do about it.

Until one day, they 'wake up' from their 20-year slumber party and realise that the conditioning regime they were on was leading them to this awakening, and it's time to decide what they want to experience next. This may have happened to you. It certainly did to me, except I was working and smoking myself to an early grave. Even worse, I believed that the only reality was the state I was in. Eight years ago I was conditioning myself to a nervous breakdown, smoking two packets of cigarettes a day, and working seven days a week with people whose main drivers were greed, deceit and screwing over everyone they possibly could. I too had become the result of this level of conditioning.

Every day had become like ground hog day, with my employees reflecting my fear of being dishonest and underhanded, with zero care for self or my clientele. It's interesting how what's staring you in the face is usually just what you need to change. At that time, though, I was still asleep and all I kept on experiencing was heartache, daily business crises and a general feeling of walking on a bridge made of straw. The more I tried to get away from it, the more the external environment pushed the other way. I had become this trapped little humanoid, hopelessly at the mercy of everything and everyone around me. External factors such as money, power and 'saving face' contribut-

ed to my conditioned state. The tail was wagging the dog. I remember the usual bitch fest conversation that I had with my colleagues at the time, buying into the reality they had constructed for themselves through their conditioning and believing that was the only possibility of existence. I can still remember saying, 'What can I possibly do? I left school in Year 10, and what else do I know bar selling cars?'

Reflecting on this now, the funny thing is that every time I said this it felt like there was something stirring inside me that just didn't sit right. I liken it to when you are sleeping lightly on a plane: your eyes are shut though you are still reasonably alert. Perhaps this was the beginning of the waking process.

Have you been here? Can you feel the darkness breaking? It was a few years after that when I finally came to the crossroads, the point where the sun broke over the horizon.

One day I was attending a motor auction at an underground dealership. The air was full of petrol fumes and cigarette smoke, the canteen dispensing hot dogs and fried foods. I felt trapped. I look down the line, where the cars push through to the front where the auctioneer calls the bids. There are ten cars in a row, all belching enough exhaust fumes to kill a buffalo. It was pretty much routine for me, though. I remember looking at two dealers I knew, Darrel the Dudder and Elvis.

I want you to imagine for a second two guys in their early fifties, overweight, always smoking, with gold all over them and one with a hairdo to make Elvis roll over in his grave and sideburns well past their used-by date. So I'm looking at these guys, cigarette and can of coke in hand, and in that split second I felt something shift in me. Have you ever had the feeling where time, noise and everything around you stood still? That's what I experienced then. I remember asking myself, 'Is this my future? Am I going to be a used-car sales man like the dodgy brothers here? Could this be what I'm becoming?' Then the decision: 'I'm done right now with this industry. I can't do it anymore.' That moment I went back to my car and began the process of closing my business down, and within four weeks, I was done.

I can tell you that the feeling of waking up free from that environment to this day brings a smile to my face like a cat in a fish shop. Following this awakening I decided to take a holiday to get away from it all, to spend time with my wife and reason for being, and to just come to terms with what lay ahead. I remember making the decision there and then that I was going to educate myself and turn my life around. I was going to condition myself into a tool that would help others and, most importantly, me. I'd always loved being with people and being of service to others.

What I want you to take away from this is that conditioning does what it is meant to do — it conditions *you*. The choice of conditioning is the true secret. The key is that you monitor your conditioning regime to ensure you stay on track. In business setting key performance indicators or KPIs, signposts along the way towards your goal— in my case, do this first not to turn into Elvis!

You may be at risk of conditioning yourself to sleep. Doing the same old same old, becoming complacent and starting to believe, as I did, that that was just 'the way things are'. I've mentioned that there are two paths of conditioning — one to condition yourself to the point of being awake to or aware of your environment; the other to make an unconscious choice as a GOD to remain asleep. Mastery is not for everyone. Some who 'choose' to remain asleep can only see a limited view of their options. To the degree that you are conditioned into a particular pattern of behaviour, you will only ever see what that behaviour allows you to see. For some people ignorance is bliss. They will avoid tough decisions rather than having to stretch or grow to the next level. So it may be that the decision to become a business owner is the worst decision you could ever make. Why? Because if you are not ready for the mastery path ahead things are going to get very tough, and whatever experience you have created for yourself is going to feel as real as the skin suit you're wearing.

Growth challenges — what doesn't kill you . . .

For some the path to mastery is fought against a high level of resistance, while for some it's where they belong. You have to gauge how it feels for you, what you are getting out of it, how much pushback you're willing to bear and in the end how effortless the path becomes. Remember, you should be on the path to becoming unconsciously competent, when everything you know and do feels effortless, as though it's a part of you. Sometimes the indicators may point in the other direction. During my time in the automotive industry it didn't always feel like I was headed in the right direction, yet during the ten-plus years I spent there I had many times when I believed I was living my purpose. I loved everything I did. It was exciting and yielded many great results and growth challenges.

I like the term *growth challenges*. For an UPologist framing words differently gives them new energy. I know this may sound a little weird, but try it for yourself. Mastery is about mastering your environment. You come to be in control of everything around you. Think of it for a second. What does the word *problem* bring up for you? Negative, is going to be hard to deal with, a dead end? Now substitute the word *challenge* and see what that does for you?

A challenge is a positive, competitive construct, isn't it? So now, you have a challenge to deal with a situation, the ability to exert your efforts in order to solve a particular situation. The mind automatically begins to think along the lines of what I call *solution thinking*. That slight shift in vocabulary can have a massive impact on the outcome.

Here's another exercise:

Make a list of all the negative words that you use in your daily vocabulary and then create a column beside it of words meaning the opposite. Now if the opposite term doesn't resonate with you, then change the word to one that suits you — for example, 'I can't' to 'I can' or 'I'll give it my best efforts'. Begin the process of deliberately seeding your everyday conversation with your new choices of empowering words. I promise you, you will see a significant change in how you feel.

You see, in some cases you will just be unable to accomplish the outcome you require. Certain situations will be beyond your control. The mastery process is also about understanding; when you have reached your limitations — and then, in many cases, what the next move is to go beyond those limitations. In his classic book *The Art of War*, Sun Tsu explains that all great warriors understand tactically when they should engage and when they should retreat. As your journey towards mastery using UPology principles deepens, you must learn the art of understanding where your conditioning has placed you at present.

As an entrepreneur, understanding your business's environment and the condition it is in are imperative, for success moving forward. If one element of it is not in good shape, you run the risk of undermining the whole business beyond recovery. I see it repeatedly, especially in marketing and sales. Having failed to take stock of the strengths and weaknesses of the business, the owner finds that any belated efforts to remedy problems are hampered by the area that is least developed. The result is often heartache and significant financial loss.

I also subscribed to the idea that knowledge is power, but I like to take it one-step further to *applied knowledge is power*. Mastery is about application. As Bruce Lee said, 'knowing is not enough — you must do'. Many business owners have initials after their name that fill the business cards they hand out, yet find they are one paycheck away from being broke or, even worse, have gone past that point and are living on a prayer. Taking stock of where you are is a core component to mastery. In business, this means taking stock of the financial health of the business, its stock, its personnel and so forth. This way you have an understanding of where most effort needs to be focused. And it needs to be able to withstand external scrutiny. Think of it like this: if your business was to have a spot inspection of all systems and strategies by experts in the industry, how would it stand the test?

Another tool I like to use here is called the 'Wheel of Business'. You can download a copy from www.UPologybook.com/resources . Fill it

in and check out the shape of your wheel. The closer you are to a complete circle, the more robust your strategy is.

Mastery isn't achieved overnight, as many people today are signing up for. It takes time, trial and error, and lots of adjustment. The best part about it is that once you reach a high standard everything starts to seem effortless and your results are of a high quality. This is because the language you use and the actions you undertake have been practised relentlessly and have therefore been tried and tested. You have the knowledge, the intuition of knowing, the credibility of application and the aura of a seasoned professional with a great record of accomplishment. Tiger Woods, David Beckham, Michael Schumacher and Miyamoto Musashi didn't just wake up that way!

Contrary to what unconditioned people think, no one is born with exceptional skills. To become an elite performer or practitioner takes thousands of hours of blood, sweat and tears, trials and tribulations.

Masters focus on purpose, not outcome

On the path to mastery the one thing I have found for myself personally and other leaders I speak to is that you don't even realise you are performing at the master level. By this, I don't claim to be a master but only to be on the journey to mastery, where you take the need to impress out of the equation and make studying your art the main focus. When you make it about the path to mastery, you automatically create an alternate standpoint. You embrace the UPology philosophy of focusing on purpose rather than outcome.

It's interesting that most masters actually don't believe they are masters. Quite the contrary, they feel that they have a long way to go on the journey, which 'perfection', if attainable at all, is still a long way off. I feel constantly that I'm never exactly where I want to be. This is common among entrepreneurs who are passionate about sharing their message with others.

I need to mention here that this too is an invisible hurdle, however. This hurdle lies in the need always to search for meaning. I've said that life is essentially a duality. When you strive for mastery you must realise there is also a price to pay. It often reveals itself in obsession. Look around at the world's creative geniuses. All share an obsession to strive in their particular field, to devote every ounce of their being to their purpose or vision. The outside world seems to fade into insignificance when everything is about this mastery.

The reason it takes time to achieve mastery is it takes time to condition the mind and the body. The spirit cannot be conditioned; rather, it's about understanding what you are. Conditioning is about practice, endless repetition to form patterns and pathways in the mind, which in turn forms pathways in the neural system. Think of it like this. When you raise a glass of water to your mouth you do so without thinking, and most of the time without even looking, and yet you bring it to your lips perfectly and without spilling a drop. Of course this simple task took time and practice to perfect, but once achieved you're done. You don't have to keep practising — you have it! You have also mastered the art of drinking and eating. Indeed, you are so efficient at it you do it without conscious thought. Your initial ambition wasn't to become a master, but in the doing you became one.

Many masters hover on the edge of insanity or addiction, although the addiction is at some levels controlled. Business breakthroughs often come about from this level of intensity. Mastery is about intensity. Either you can play the game at half pace or you can play full out. As you may have picked up by now, I choose the latter. But as Master Jedi Obi-Wan Kenobi puts it, you must bring balance to the force, Luke! Your obsession can become consuming if you allow it to. It is imperative that *you* control it.

From time to time, I still feel this drive, this uneasiness to continue to push on through. At times, I still feel guilty if I don't spend my entire existence on my obsessions. Some of you reading this book will be nodding your heads, understanding exactly what I'm talking about,

while others will be thinking of calling the people in white coats to come and take me away. My wife often tells me that I could fix this illness with medication! The key is always to bring balance to your game.

Chapter 9: Self-conditioning

*“First one must understand conditioning
– only then can we speak of choice”*

- Rasheed Ogunlaru

Conditioning, conditioning and conditioning my school gym teacher’s favourite words. I remember his name was Mr Boothroyd. I believe they used his example in the English dictionary under *hard ass*. His skin was that of a saddlebag and his complexion that of a hardened warrior. After a number of years in the military, he went on to be conditioning coach for one of the large football clubs before becoming a teacher. His idea of fun was running your ass out for hours until you almost passed out. He was over 50 years old when I was in high school and he had the physique of a man half his age with the stamina that would make Lance Armstrong happy. I only now realise that his mastery was in the art of conditioning.

As already noted, you should never allow your obsession to overtake you. Boothroyd’s conditioning obsession often clouded his judgement, especially towards kids who were physically weak or not athletic. He used to beat you on the backside with this nasty sneaker called a Dunlop KT26. If you grew up an Australian, more than likely you would know of this lethal weapon. For everyone else, imagine the equivalent of the chain of a military tank. Its hard rubber was ribbed, so the moment it touched you you knew you were in for some serious pain and borderline internal bleeding. All too regularly, whether you ran too slow, failed to climb the peg wall or just said a word out of place, he’d announce, ‘Go and get the sandshoe’, and you knew what was coming: you were about to be on painful display in front of the rest of the class.

Choose the right path towards mastery

We are often over conditioned, both personally and in business. Some business owners have become immune to the external world simply by focusing only on their business and nothing else. They are so condi-

tioned to their ways that they find it extremely difficult to let go of the past or to see another perspective. Let me make this clear. It's almost certain you will have these obsessive qualities; the key is to control them.

Again, the word is balance. Balance your business life with your personal life. Even better is to do what you love doing, which feels more like fun than work so you look forward to spending time doing it.

Before you can master your business and personal life you need to choose the right path towards mastery. If you don't have that right now, I hope reading this book will get you clear about what your path could look like. In the end, you must make the choice. So many people on their journey towards mastery leave all the tough decisions to someone else, such as their teachers, their bosses or their family. To understand your path you should connect with the internal guidance system discussed in previous chapters, tuning into what makes you come alive, knowing that this is where you want to be.

I often encounter other entrepreneurs on the journey. In conversation, many share that even after years of searching they are still unsure of what they should be doing. I believe they are experiencing too much of the noise that comes from a cluttered mind and reflects the mindset in EGO — the conscious mind! We have every answer, completely customised for our chosen life journey. I know this may sound a bit weird, but I believe that the path of life is already pre-chosen, though it may have different endings. It's like a children's story that has two written endings: door A = x, door B = y; the choice is yours. The same is true of everything you do.

Certain decisions you make lead to outcomes you would never have dreamed of. I can relate that to the path I'm on at the moment. I would never have imagined I would sit down and write the book you are now reading. There is one certainty: decisions always offer a range of outcomes — some great, others obstacles to get around or learn from, but outcomes nonetheless. What's great is you will always have time to

reflect on your choices, and whether they were good or bad is just a point of view, right? Often the choices we deemed the worst at the time allowed us the greatest growth. Mastery is about growth and about our ability to condition ourselves while time runs its course. Many dispute the notion of linear time, proposing that past, present and future occur contemporaneously, but that is topic for another discussion.

A fundamental principle of UPology is the continuous renewal of self and business, as symbolised by the circle of Ouroboros. The circle has no beginning and no end, and no starting point — you enter and exit at the point you choose. You can choose to engage or not, but sitting on the fence is not allowed as it means indecision and procrastination, which ultimately lead to confusion and anxiety. Business entrepreneurs, who procrastinate, end up doing nothing. I know that by reading this book you have already decided to engage. The question then becomes how far will you go and for how long?

The cycle of the Ouroboros also signifies the need to condition yourself to attain mastery levels. Although it is a lifetime process, conditioning and the setting of new norms can actually be achieved quite quickly. I have found that the sooner you start the process of repeating and refining your thoughts and actions, the quicker the attainment of higher levels of mastery.

Once you learned to drive, you found that driving any type of car was relatively effortless. All it took were a few minor adjustments and you were good, right? It's the same with everything you learn. You are already a master in thousands of tasks you do every day. You just don't realise it. We've mentioned eating and drinking, and could add simple physical acts such as walking and running, throwing and catching. You know the skills you haven't mastered, by the way, because you feel clunky or uncertain every time you attempt to do them. In business, you hesitate before initiating a marketing campaign or when putting together your accounts. You avoid what might be a painful task. You

would rather suffer the consequences of inaction than face uncertainty.

Here's an example of what I mean. I was a musician for over twenty years, playing drums with bands all over the country, recording and teaching. With the amount of practice, I did on my own, had I been doing it for money I could have bought an island, yet there was one groove I just couldn't get down. I remember breaking it down piece by piece, repeatedly. But every single time the band decided to play that tune or groove I felt an instant fear, sometimes a physical tightening in my muscles. I made every excuse under the sun for why we shouldn't play that tune, until one day I realised what the triggers for this were:

- A. I had not mastered the basics of single and double drum strokes (these are the two combinations that form rhythm). I had simply not reached the high standard that these grooves required. I'll come back to this in a sec.
- B. I had imprinted into my mind a memetic structure that said; every time I play this tune I am going to make a mistake and stuff it up. The origin of this thinking, by the way, was a particular rehearsal when one of the band members freaked out and said, 'That just isn't happening man, get your shit together'.

My interpretation led to an instant questioning of my worthiness. I know what you're thinking. How does making a mistake in a tune relate to 'worthiness'? Have you noticed the connection yourself here? Make a mistake in sport, in class, at work or in your business and you get a sense of failure in yourself. That's what I call a *trigger pathway*. This comes about because of the conditioning you have done on yourself. Do you see the connection and the circle?

Take control — and then own it!

As a drummer, I had been playing and teaching for years and had spent thousands of hours practicing, gigging and recording, but when it came to a tough groove or an odd time signature my mind instantly reawakened the old pattern and went into the same freeze mode again. After years of putting up with this 'virus' I decided I'd had

enough. I realised that what I needed to work on wasn't so much my physical technique as my mental attitude.

You see, physically I knew what I needed to do, but mentally I remained uncertain, fearful- Fearful of being wrong or humiliated. Have you ever had these types of thoughts that make you instantly drop into a different mode of self?

Throughout this book, I have given you examples of beatings in both personal and business situations. But beatings come in all shapes and forms. In this case, it was a comment from a fellow musician, a single moment and a group of words that for whatever reason I recorded in my conscious mind to replay when a similar scenario recurred. If I'd had to ask the guy who made the comment a few weeks after the event — heck, even 48 hours later — more than likely he wouldn't even have remembered it, let alone kept it in his conscious mind.

The key takeaway here is that mastery is about pattern recognition and the capacity to deal with the thought process, action and emotion simply as a mechanism to help you evolve. Often what we dismiss as an impossible task is, on investigation, a lot simpler than we expect. A thought such as that encountered through a beating has potent energy only if it's not recognised and dealt with. It gains momentum every time it plays itself out, until in some cases it envelopes the host and becomes habit.

Towards attaining a higher level of mastery, the scenario would look like this. The beating occurs. (In this case my fellow band member says, 'That just isn't happening man, get your shit together'.) As a trained UPologist, I would simply view those nine words as expressing one person's shared opinion, and no more than that. The next step is to ask myself the following questions:

- A. Do I choose to learn anything from this opinion?
- B. Is it 100 per cent true?
- C. Do I need to get my shit together?
- D. Do I choose to take this on board as indicating something I have done wrong?

- E. Can I change the scenario, and do I want to work on this?
- F. Shall I take this personally or is it just about this particular situation?
- G. What attitude am I bringing to this — one of defeat or one of certainty and self-belief?

Now I know this feels like we are at the psychiatrist's office. Are all these questions really necessary? Probably not! What I'm trying to suggest here is some questions that might allow you to defuse the scenario, reducing its power, which will help you to recover from a beating more quickly, until you reach the point where you no longer even experience it as a beating. The path towards mastery eventually leads towards evolution. What used to block our progress then simply slips past us, causing no damage at all.

For me, at that given point, even knowing what I knew then, I chose to turn a negative scenario into a positive outcome. I figured out that:

- A. I needed to change my attitude.
- B. I needed to practise until it became second nature.

The attitude part meant that even before I started practising those grooves I adjusted my mental focus from 'Oh not this again, I just can't get this. I'm gonna stuff it up' or 'What is the band going to say when I can't get it? What if I did this at a gig? Better play it safe' to 'I can kick the shit out of this groove — I own it' or 'This is the coolest groove to play and I'm on it' or 'It's simple — just a combination of single and double strokes, just as easy as the other grooves I make come alive'.

This shift began the process of change. In all honesty it didn't happen overnight, but persistence and a 'never surrender' attitude won through in the end. I remember about four weeks later while on stage the band decided to change the set list around and pulled out the tune I'd had all the grief with. When they announced it, my initial response was to retreat into freak-out mode, even though I recognised this was just a pattern I had conditioned myself into, but I quickly changed my attitude and said to the guys, 'Let's kick it hard!' From the count-in, 1 –

2 – 3 – 4, *boom* straight into the pocket! I had nailed it, and I never again had a problem with this or any other tune that I needed to learn. If necessary, I simply used the above formula and shifted my attitude.

As a business owner, how do you deal with these types of conditioned responses? Are you burying your head in the sand every time you face uncertainty or are you taking control and slaying those demons?

One of my great drum teachers, Jack Savage, once told me a story he'd heard from a friend of his who'd played with the world-renowned Buddy Rich Band in the 1940s. Buddy had been a young, up-and-coming drummer on the Broadway scene. One day he received a call for a gig with a local band when the drummer got sick. The bass player in this band was famous for putting new young musicians in their place. Turning up for the gig, Buddy already knew what to expect. So without a moment's hesitation he walked straight up to the bass player and whispered, 'If you make me look stupid or try to pull any shit, I'll run you over with my car and if you get up I'll reverse that many times they'll have to hose you off the street!' From that day on the tight relationship between the two musicians was established, leading to a life-long partnership in the Buddy Rich Big Band.

Young Buddy Rich had just the right UPology attitude. Get in there and own it. Never let hesitation get in the way or allow it to question you or your self-worth. You have everything you need to live the most incredible life. You just have to believe you deserve it!

The balance between doing and being

Conditioning takes many forms. For most westerners it's always about doing. Now I understand it's important to do, especially for many business owners who, rather than actually being productive, are caught up in stuff, which threatens to overwhelm them, causing them to feel like they're a mouse on a treadmill. As an UPologist, you must also realise that mastery is about mastering oneself. This means understanding and embracing balance in your life, as symbolised by the principles of yin and yang (first discussed in chapter 1), which in-

cludes the balance between doing and being. The business owner needs to embrace this concept in order to grow as an entrepreneur. Too often, I see business owners always doing and never spending any time either planning for the terrain ahead or simply smelling the roses. How can you see what's coming if you always have your head down?

As I have shared with you when discussing strategy, having a fixed mindset leads only to more of what you have already. You can never grow as a human being or a business operator because you're too busy being the practitioner rather than the entrepreneur. The invisible hurdle of the self-worth meme has conditioned you to constantly doing or working in the business, because if you're not, you must be bludging. I too have suffered from this 'virus' but now I realise that's all it is, a pattern that I created and that I can change, and that I can let it go!

On the path to mastery, conditioning your mind to being is more critical than to doing. It allows you to be able to think clearly and precisely using the power of the subconscious combined with a clear conscious mind. Both sides are important, yin and yang, but when one is out of balance, the whole entity is out of balance. Continued daily practice helps you progress towards mastery of balance.

As an exercise, right now sit and weigh up your thoughts and actions to see how far out of balance you are, and write down the areas where you can *let go*. By this, I mean mentally and physically release yourself from 'stuff'. What I like to do is look at how I can really strip my thoughts bare. Imagine if you could pass through a space portal to take a trip across the universe, but you could bring with you only your most high-value thoughts. Which insignificant thoughts would you leave behind? More importantly, what sort of conditioning would you have to go through in order to be able to let those thoughts go in an instant?

Often mastery isn't about doing, it's about being still. You can't condition yourself not to think, because to do so you're thinking about telling yourself not to think (there's a concept!). It isn't what comes first, the chicken or the egg, but rather which one do I *choose* first. The mind has infinite potential for learning. It can throw up your ultimate fear or make you godlike. It all depends on how you choose to exercise it. The mind is how you condition it to be and what you choose to retain and to let go of.

Most people don't realise what their mind can do for them. There are no general instructions on how to operate it at its full potential, but we are starting to figure it out. Countless books, tests, studies and research papers have been written about the mind's potential and how best to use it. You are in control of this limitless abundance; it comes down to how much time you decide to either waste or use positively.

It's not how often you are struck down — it's how often you get back up

I spent many years practising Kung Fu, as well as other martial arts disciplines. With this style, there were long sessions of sparring during which you could test your skill in a controlled environment. This didn't always give you the authentic experience of a contest, though at about 75 to 80 per cent intensity it came close. Put simply, the kicks, punches and takedowns were held back a little to honour the sport and the fact that you were sparring with a member of your own club. During some heated exchanges, however, the boundaries were pushed back and the contest was fought with full contact and at full intensity, leading to knockouts, broken bones, nosebleeds and a world of pain. When this happened, if you were knocked down, you got back UP. If you copped a bleeding nose or a cut, you fixed it up and got back into it. Mental attitude is 80 per cent of the fight. The rest is physical conditioning.

Why am I sharing this? If you haven't had any fighting experience, I can tell you that in most cases at the start it seems like controlled chaos, with nothing going to plan, everything reactive and out of control.

Then after a certain amount of practice things start to make sense, you begin to see the terrain ahead so that most of the time you can influence the outcome in your favour.

As a business owner, you need to develop and master that same mental toughness. The ability to look through all the turmoil around you, to see where opportunity lies and to press on accordingly can only be developed through conditioning. The critical factor is to strengthen your armour. Conditioning your body, which we'll cover shortly, is about becoming stronger and fitter. In Chinese Martial Arts, it's called *chi gung* (there are many DVDs available on this technique). The practice calls for conditioning of the muscular and cardiovascular systems through the use of controlled breathing, bracing of the diaphragm and tensing of chosen muscle groups. Long practice gives you the ability literally to develop a thicker skin. As a business entrepreneur, this toughness is essential. Until you become a master, business seems like one long sparring session, controlled chaos with all the same elements excepting the bloody nose (hopefully). The journey's goal is to attain the ability to exude calm throughout the day, adapt to the environment and dictate a favourable outcome.

Better to get things clear here. In business and in your personal life, it's not a matter of if you're going to have to deal with a tough situation or a beating, it's a matter of when. They're a part of life, unless you're living in a box wrapped in cotton wool. So it only makes sense to build what I call your *battle armour*. Think of it as having your own batman outfit to fend off the 'bullets' that come your way during a business negotiation or a personal crisis. As with the martial arts, the important point is to use it only for good and never to do harm.

On the path to mastery, you will sometimes find mental and physical conditioning used for the wrong causes. For example, I have seen business owners use NLP practices to hypnotise and manipulate untrained people into doing things that aren't always in their best interest. Many more use their conditioning to help others along their

journey, resulting in a win/win outcome. As an UPologist, it is only win/win! Anything other than that is dishonourable and unacceptable.

Reconnect with the natural world

The strength of ants and the tenacity of bees are truly amazing. In proportion to their size, they outperform other species easily. Reasons for this include that they work collaboratively, demonstrate total loyalty to their tribe, share accountability and exhibit conditioning to mastery levels. We can learn much from nature. The botanist Luther Burbank, in his book *The Training of the Human Plant*, shares that the best conditioning for humans is from studying, living with and learning from nature. She has everything you need in order to be physically fit and mentally sound. If you can tune in to her energy, then ultimately you will be able to connect to your true self.

So much has been written about health, it makes your head spin. Use this potion, take this pill, rub in this ointment etc., etc. The more of this we follow, the unhealthier we become. Have you noticed we have pills now for pills? I mean WTF is going on here. How can it be that with all this technology, all our advances in science and medicine, we are still at the coalface when it comes to illness? I believe it is because we have become detached from nature. If we were to return our trust to nature, she would look after us, because she has all the cures. It's simply a matter of reconnecting with her.

I'm not talking about becoming what society refers to dismissively as a 'tree hugger', growing a beard and losing your shoes (if this is you, no offence meant!). What I mean is balance. The UPology way is about balance in everything you do, whether in business or your personal life, surrounding yourself with the life-giving elements of nature. I have read some amazing stories about the healing qualities of nature. Vladimir Megre's *Ringing Cedars* books tell great stories about how nature helps treat and condition the human body and spirit. Drawing on this spirit, everyone, regardless of status, wealth, size or colour, can make a choice to make a difference in their life and those of others around them.

When conditioning our health, once again there is a sequence to follow. Although we have been conditioned to believe otherwise by TV, radio and the newspapers, once you delve deeper than what you see on the surface amazing concepts reveal themselves. Have you noticed why I didn't say amazing 'truths'? I believe there's no such thing as truth, only perspective and choice.

How to eat, move and stay healthy: six principles for an elevated state of being

I learned the following principles from one of my great teachers and masters, Paul Chek. I have mentioned him several times in this book because he has influenced my life a great deal and because his depth of knowledge is the best. He didn't invent the following health regime, however; he simply put its principles into context.

Structure is critical in our lives. I believe that living a structured life, paradoxically, creates freedom. Having a guiding set of principles makes the journey enjoyable as well as challenging. I love to work constantly to condition my mind and body. At the same time, I'm okay with not participating for a period of time. This isn't a back door to letting myself off the hook, so to speak, or to making excuses or self-justifications. It is merely a state of mind to come from. I feel I need to clarify this. Most business owners, given the chance, would rather hide behind the veil of being 'too busy' to take the necessary accountability for ensuring a healthy mind and body. Taking a short time out helps me keep track and keep balance. Remember, not being in control is being out of control, which is a precursor to anxiety, depression, obesity, illness and so on. If not now, it's only a matter of time.

Nature is the only perfect fit for you. It designed you and is designed for you. Therefore, practising the following conditioning exercises and maintaining a state of positive energy will go a long way towards keeping you in good shape mentally, physically and spiritually. Have you ever noticed how you feel when you've spent all day in an office that has no view of the outside or anything natural in it, or during a

long flight? It feels like the energy is drained right out of you. It is because you are disconnected from nature and Mother Earth.

The foundation principles set out below are specifically designed and sequenced to create the optimal physical, mental, emotional and spiritual outcome. Before I begin let me set up where they came from. The modalities are a culmination of research on our ancestors, scientific data and Paul's years of experience under the umbrella of three principles — eating, movement and health. Paul's book is available at this link:

<http://www.amazon.com/How-Eat-Move-Become-Healthy/dp/1583870067>

I strongly recommend this book, and I have personally sold hundreds of copies to clients and friends. I will visit it only briefly here, so should you wish to delve deeper you know what to do. The modalities are sequenced as follows:

1. Thoughts
2. Breath
3. Hydration
4. Nutrition
5. Movement
6. Sleep

1. Thoughts

We have covered this topic a great deal in this book. In summary, *what we think, we become*, so the quality and source of our thoughts play an integral part in our physiology and our overall wellbeing. Positive thoughts are proven to have significant impact on human health. Keeping alert to our mimetic patterns, and the cause and effect of our thinking, is paramount for a healthy life. To a large degree, everything stems from our thoughts. They are therefore the number one priority for optimal health.

The sequence of the principles also has to do with the survival of the organism: for example, no thoughts, no life; no breath, no life; and hydration is a prerequisite for nutrition. We can survive for three days

without liquids, three weeks without food, but only three minutes without air. Movement takes priority over sleep, because lack of movement restricts blood flow, fluid circulation and removal of waste products. After a certain time without sleep, you will begin to suffer delusions. Think of it like this. You could go without a limb, but no heart and it's all over for ya! Do you get the idea?

2. Breath

Breath is life. Inhaling is bringing life into the body. We breathe in about 25,900 times a day and the quality of that breathing, its patterns; have a critical effect on our physical, mental and emotional wellness. Let me give you an example. It is quite common to see someone with a small hump just below their neck about where the shoulders start. This is what's called a 'dowager's hump' or, for the medically inclined, hyperkyphosis. A common cause of this condition is what's called 'mouth breathing', which in turn is due to nose blockages that may be caused by mucus build-up. As a result, the sufferer gasps and reaches forward for air, which encourages a forward head posture that in some cases leads to hyperkyphosis. Another symptom of such breathing patterns is a change in the gut's PH levels so that it becomes more acidic and tricks the body into thinking it's in distress mode. The effect of this is that the body releases excessive amounts of cortisol and adrenaline, as it does in a 'fight or flight' response. This keeps the body in alert mode and increases stress. This is because a large proportion of our receptors are located in the nasal passages. These are what tell the body whether everything is okay and it can return to homeostasis. Think of it like a car that's constantly on high revs rather than revving for a bit then returning to neutral. Eventually it has a damaging effect on the engine that leads to a breakdown.

Exercise:

Begin with being mindful of your breathing patterns. Ask yourself whether you are a mouth breather or a nose breather. If you are unsure, ask someone to observe you. Next, begin the process of breathing in through your nose and feel the cold sensation in your nostrils when you do that. If you can't feel this, just sit with it a while, be still and fo-

cus your attention. (This works only if you don't have excessive mucus build up or a sinus issue.) Once you are aware with this, and then exhale through your mouth, compressing your abdominal muscles as if you were emptying a hot-water bottle. Repeat this cycle and build on this conditioning. If you want to know more, drop me a line at nick@nickpsaila.com and I'll send you further info.

3. Hydration

More than 75 per cent of our body mass is made up of water. By increasing our hydration we can contribute to our overall wellbeing, from maintaining correct body weight, immune function and spinal health through to suppressing headaches. Studies indicate that PH levels in the body dictate the state of our overall wellness. Low PH levels create acidic environments. Think of us like a plant: when we are dehydrated our health shrivels; extensive periods without water and we eventually start to die. Water has many healing powers. Dehydration and excessive acidic, processed foods can cause damage at a gut level and affect cell integrity, leading to all kinds of disease. Remember, disease signals that the body is out of sync. Your level of hydration dictates the health of your cells. The more dehydrated you are, the more your body is threatened at a cellular level.

Good hydration is also important for brain function. Our brain uses electrical impulses when thinking and so fluctuates in temperature, just as your PC does, using water to cool it down. As the brain is the most important organ in the body, it is essential to maintain it at optimal operating temperature. Poor hydration levels can lead to poor brain function. To read more on this topic, check out Dr Batmanghelidj's work at www.watercure.com/.

Exercise:

Here's a simple way to calculate how much water your body requires to stay hydrated. Calculate 3 per cent of your body weight in litres (kg) of water. For example, if you weigh 60 kilograms, you need to drink about 2 litres (or four 500 ml bottles) per day. When you exercise, add another litre to replace the water lost in sweat. This amount of water should keep you well hydrated. The most important point to remem-

ber is when you feel thirsty, you're probably already on your way to being dehydrated.

4. Nutrition

I could write a book about just this topic but I'll attempt to summarise it in a few paragraphs. There are many, many different types of diets out there, but please be aware of the FAD (Fast Approaching Death) regimes among them. They promise the world and deliver not much.

What I want to speak to you about here are a few guidelines I have used with hundreds of clients in the wellness industry. I have found it worked exceptionally well in keeping them in good shape, increasing their energy and keeping them symptom free. To be clear, it didn't work for all of them, so you may need to experiment and adjust according to your personal needs.

Approaches to good nutrition should recognise the three main human metabolic types:

- A. Fast oxidiser; Dominant Protein Type- This is suited to people with a high metabolic rate and a food intake of 70 per cent protein and 30 per cent carbohydrate.
- B. Mixed oxidiser: Protein/Carb Type- This is suited to people with a medium metabolic rate and a food intake that balances 50 per cent protein and 50 per cent carb.
- C. Slow oxidiser: Dominant Carb Type- This is suited to people with a slow metabolic rate.

With regard to portion size, here's a simple guideline (use the smallest dinner plate size as your measure):

- A. Protein portion: surf and turf and some legumes — about a palm-size serving.
- B. Carb portion; turf (e.g. of lettuce or vegetables) — a handful.

If you're looking to lose a few kilos, I would recommend that you increase your protein intake rather than carbs and, importantly, eat more frequently (at least six times a day including snacks). Remember,

this is just a general measure and the more in touch you are with your own individual nutritional needs, the better for your health.

Some keys to remember:

- Eat organic when possible.
 - Avoid processed foods altogether. Reduce sugar intake drastically. Do not overeat.
 - Eat raw foods when possible. Don't stress over your food.

When you delve into eating right for your metabolic type, you will begin to be really in tune with your nutritional needs. The cleaner the body (the lower its toxicity from eating crap and adverse environmental conditions), the more you will feel the beneficial effects of food. Along with other animals, insects and living things we are energy converters — that is, we turn the food we eat into a different form of energy. Effectively, energy conversion occurs all the way up the food chain: the soil is planted with a seed, which grows into grass, a cow eats grass, and humans eat the cow. When we die, we return to the soil and the cycle begins again. The Ouroboros is elegantly demonstrated in the food cycle.

5. Movement

Note that I use the word *movement* rather than 'exercise' or 'workout' here. There is a significant difference. In today's society, we are obsessed with looking like the airbrushed models we see in magazines or the twigs we see on the fashion catwalk. Most people believe that health is what you look like on the outside rather than a balance of inner and outer health. I can't tell you how many athletes and clients I have treated who on the outside looked amazingly healthy while internally they were dying fast, overstressed, full of chemical weight loss concoctions and nutritionally deficient. Having the six-pack abs or looking like a swarm of bees has stung you, (the typical bodybuilder) isn't a route to longevity; in some cases it proves quite the opposite. It is important to balance your movement (remember the principles of yin and yang) between *working in* routines such as yoga, Tai Chi, chi gung, Pilates or flow-style exercises. And *working out* routines such as

cardio exercise to keep the heart rate up, for example dance or boxing (avoid a heavy amount of running as it plays a major role in joint injury), mixed with strength building, weight-based exercise.

Here are six so-called ‘primal patterns’ that form the foundation of all your movement:

- Push
- Pull
- Twist
- Bend
- Twist
- Squat.

All movement is based around these principal patterns. Everything you do is a variation or combination of them.

Exercise:

Begin by setting up a weekly plan followed by a daily activity routine. The key is routine. Mastery and conditioning is about routine being embedded until it becomes second nature, a free-flowing part of your everyday practice. Ensure you cover a good mix of movement that encompasses both in and out style movement patterns — 30 to 60 minutes at least three to four times per week will suffice. Should you choose more, then all the better?

The takeaway from this is that if you don’t move you become rigid. This is the major cause of injury, obesity and chronic pain. You are designed to move around — that’s why you have legs. It is through movement that we are able to pump life-giving fluid around the body. A great book to check out is Linda Hartley’s *Wisdom of the Body Moving*, which talks about how movement affects us at both a physical and a spiritual level, and how connecting to our self through movement draws on the core essence of whom we are.

There are many benefits here for your business. There’s the satisfaction and morale boost you experience from accomplishing your

exercise goals, the social aspects (good opportunities for networking), and not least the increases in your mental, emotional and hormonal wellbeing. If you haven't yet taken action, then the simple solution is *just start*. Doing nothing will never get you on the road to mastery; rather, it will harden you and eventually lead to disengagement.

6. Circadian rhythms (sleep)

In today's hectic world, we are increasingly deprived of one of the body's (and mind's) necessities — sleep. The invention of the light bulb has thrown the body's natural rhythms into chaos. Now we trick the body into believing it's daylight for 12 to 20 hours per day. As a business owner with plenty to do, I am constantly aware of how long I have been 'at it'. The internet gives us a platform by which to communicate with others all over the world 24/7. It's so easy to get into the groove, and the next thing you know it is 2 a.m.

The optimal time for going to sleep is around 10.30 p.m., allowing for a wind-down period of around 40 minutes or so before this. A good wake-up time is around 5.30 a.m. Think of it that when the sun goes down it's time to wind down and when the sun comes up it's time to rise and shine. There is much data on the effects of insomnia caused by stimulants and the high levels of sugar found in alcohol, processed foods and energy drinks. The long-term effects of poor or lack of, sleep cannot be reversed. By this I mean you can't kill yourself for weeks and months on end then go on holiday for a few days and think you'll be re-energised. One of the worst forms of torture is sleep deprivation.

The room you sleep in needs to be as dark as possible, ideally pitch black. One reason for this is that the human body is like a solar panel, continuously absorbing light and converting it into energy. So any sign of light in your room acts like a wake-up mechanism. Once again, there has been lots of research in this field.

The main job of sleep is to allow our conscious mind to rest and the subconscious mind to conduct system checks and connect with the infinite. The longer the period of disconnection from the infinite, the

more isolated we feel. For the first few hours of asleep the body is checking to ensure all systems are online and functioning correctly, including lymphatic, muscular, pulmonary and respiratory systems. From then on, the mind does its checks, making sure you are you, your memory is intact and so on. This is why high levels of dehydration and/or a high sugar intake and late nights play havoc on the mind and body.

Sleep plays a vital part in our functional performance throughout the day. Presenteeism (spending time at work while not functioning at top form, with a concomitant drop in productivity) is a growing problem in the workplace. How present are you at work? You can correlate this to its source in your sleep quality. We all have built-in circadian rhythms, which can vary to some extent. This is why to function at your best it is important that you become aware of your own rhythms.

Exercise:

Before bed every night ensure you have around 30 minutes of quiet time. Completely disengage from all technology. Long hours in front of the computer can have a 'strobe effect', with the constant release of cortisol because the body thinks it's time to wake up. This confuses the body as it's dark outside, which evokes our natural sleep. Sit or lie still and breathe using the breathing exercises I outlined earlier. Non-rhythmic, meditative audio may help. This should ensure you fall asleep easily, allowing the mind and body to recharge.

Note: There have been studies done on the benefits of 'cat naps' and productivity. Having a 20-minute 'power nap' during the day allows for greater productivity than all the time management courses you can dream of, so if you have the ability to apply this in your business, try it.

Following these self-conditioning principles will have a massively positive effect on your mind and body. You have everything you need to live a healthy, happy lifestyle without the need for constant doctor's visits, stimulants or prescription drugs. Think of the word *lifestyle* — this is the style of your life. The question is will you use your body as a

trash can? As with all types of conditioning, what you put in is what you get out.

A conversation I had a few days ago produced to an interesting 'ah-ha' moment that I need to share with you before we move on to the next chapter. The methodology I have created here will always be in flux. Mastery, as I've said, is an ever-evolving work-in-progress. The quest will continue to bring with it new possibilities for change and progress. What's exciting is we cannot know how it will evolve, or what purpose you may find when you practise the methodology and begin to live the life you create and deserve. As you experience the conditioning of yourself and your business at a high level, you begin to realise that what comes with it is freedom of expression — mentally, physically and spiritually.

Conclusion

“Rest assured that whatever station of life we are placed, princely or lowly, it contains the lessons and experiences necessary now for our evolution, and gives us the best advantage for the development of ourselves.”

- Edward Bach

In my continuing quest to reinvent myself and search for deeper knowledge and understanding, perhaps I'm guilty of not always spending enough time simply *being* in that new space. I sometimes have a sense of chasing a goal that is constantly shifting, a feeling that the ground is always moving under me.

Perhaps you too have felt this — the feeling of being out of place or not fitting into the traditional map in some way- The perfect husband, lover; The employee of the month; The ideal son or daughter; The admired academic and so on. Well, the more I understand this, the more I realise that this missing piece, the external need for us to belong, has its source in our separation from the ONE. Evolution takes place on different levels: the evolution of the body, the mind and the spirit. The speed of it is dictated partly by you and partly by the infinite being that you are. Everything has its place and time.

I believe this feeling of always looking for the answer can be explained by the fact that I am still working on my own evolution. The key is my acceptance that I am more than this skin suit, that separation is a construct that I have created and been indoctrinated in. I can tell you that I have spent years seeking to understand these concepts. The interesting part is that I believe I have now begun to see the light, and it is that we are so much greater than we believe we are, that we have the wonder of the universe readily available. For most of the time we can't see it because we are concentrating on our limitations rather than on our unlimited potential to create our own reality.

The antithesis of this viewpoint is a void that expresses itself in a feeling of disconnection. This is then, compounded in the mind into stress and the illusion of being separate, alone, no matter how much we strive for acceptance. If you knew you were limitless and a part of everything around you, how different would, your life be right now?

Just imagine for a moment, that one day we wake from our slumber to recognise that we are all really one GOD. In addition, that each of our 7 billion stories is as important as every other story. Every story depends on every other to offer a different point of view as one part of a perfect whole. That in order to realise that we are perfect already- this life story is the imperfection mirror- That the yin and yang coexist because they are exact polar opposites of each other. One without the other is incomplete.

Imagine completely and wholeheartedly believing in every part of your being that you are GOD already and that everything you ever wanted and will ever want is there for you already. It's up to you to bring it into your reality. The secret lies in the evolution of your mind. Now just imagine for a moment that the day of your awakening is here. What could you do if you knew that you were perfect in every way, that you have the ability to create worlds and that everything around you, everything you believe is real, you have been creating all along, perfectly designed to fit you? Designed by you as a GOD simply for your own entertainment, and what's more, designed in such a way for you not to find out that it's you who created the game in the first place?

If you are already perplexed by this viewpoint, that is good! It means you're thinking. Opinions are just different thought processes emanating from the one conversation. It is not my intention to offend anyone who believes differently, as I hope I have made clear throughout this book. It is, however, my aim to help you in the evolution process both as a business owner and as an individual.

Why do almost all of us find it unimaginable to believe there is no separation between 'us' and 'them', a 'god' and a 'follower'? Is this so far-fetched? Have we been programmed so radically that we must believe that we cannot be GOD? What do we do when we dream? Often the dream is so real we can barely tell the difference, right.

In order for you to begin the process of evolution in your personal and business world, I challenge you to open your mind to the most radical of possibilities. Most people dare not challenge the notion of being a GOD, but is it any different from deciding to do something you thought impossible, and then succeeding, regardless of your previous scepticism. Remember, everything is about perspective. Some business owners I have worked with found that raising their prices was so challenging that they felt incapacitated for weeks if not months trying to deal with it. One of the reasons is the invisible hurdle around self-worth. Once they accepted the possibility that raising their fees was about creating a shift in their behaviour and actions, it no longer felt that far-fetched.

My aim is not to debate religious beliefs but rather suggest new constructs. To strive towards evolution through the methodology shared in this book, it is important that you understand that:

A. You can only evolve when you are ready.

B. Once you make the choice to evolve, you can never look back.

Evolution comes with a price. Once you recognise that there is a new YOU in you, then you'll find a distance opening up between where you were and where you are going. For me looking back at my past feels interesting. I look at the past and wonder how the choices I made at that time led me to what I did then, whether at work or personally. The more I immerse myself in learning and personal development, the greater the distance between Nick 101 and the evolving Nick who grows day by day.

Once you have read this book, parts of you will never be the same again. They will change, and give you much food for thought. All prac-

tising UPologists discover an increase in their self-confidence, their beliefs in their abilities and the breadth of their thinking. The man I used to be still remains at some levels, but most of me continues to change. I have no regrets over where I was in the past, what I did or any single element of my past actions, with two exceptions: I regret any hurt or unkindness for which I was responsible. And I wish I had shown more gratitude for everything and everyone around me.

I'm humbled by the fact that whatever I did or said, however I acted, was all perfectly in sync for me because it was built by me. Isn't that cool? Throughout my life, a certain set of events had to take place to get me to where I needed to be at any point in time. What do they say, 'in hindsight everything is 20/20 vision'? Well, so too is life. All the struggles you have been through as a business owner, as a father or mother, as a worker, dealing with an illness or other crisis, taking any serious beating, all have influenced your development in a myriad ways we cannot even begin to fathom.

Many would argue this point. They'd say all they have known is bad luck and a hard life, and I can sympathise with them. But if this is your life, I'm wondering if you have looked at the possibility of time being more than the experience. This gauge will help you identify that the 'life script' you have written up to this point has had a common thread that only you have the ability to change. What is it that repeatedly keeps on turning up in your life to show you what you need to learn and move on from? Through evolutionary thinking, you can do this. It does take practice, however, and continued renewal of mind, body and spirit.

I began this book by telling you about my sister Jo and my nephew James's death, and about how that has affected my family. At the time, I couldn't even fathom what it was supposed to teach me and how I would manifest that in my own life. In hindsight, there has been so many changes triggered by those events; one of them you are reading now. I have grown closer to my family and I now have a very different perspective on the life/work balance. For me life comes before work.

For many in business this is a foreign concept. However, I believe you are defined not by what you do but by who and what you are. I have never seen a tombstone inscribed with the words 'he had a great business'.

Your life is defined by the character you play. The script contains all the experiences and interactions you want with others. Your choice then dictates the outcome.

You can take nothing with you from the past except your experiences. You may come close to replicating an experience, but you will never truly relive the moment. You may reminisce about the past and relive it in your mind, but that is all it is — a memory of the experience. In the end, evolution is simply a natural progression. The level of that evolution, however, is unique to each of us, shaped by our experiences, perfectly designed for our own greater purpose. Evolution is an ongoing process that is never 'attainable'; it can only be interpreted from where we are at any given point in time. We have spoken about duality in the balance of yin and yang, and of how one principle cannot exist without the other- so too with evolution, both personal and in business.

Here is what I mean. The only way you know your business has evolved is that you see how things are different from the way they used to be, and the only way for you to know that is by having the 'now' to compare against the past. One cannot exist without the other. The same goes for your personal life. For example, if a current relationship is bringing you happiness compared to one in the past, one reason you can recognise this is the fact that you now have a fresh viewpoint from which to assess your experience.

The more you evolve, the more you see everything from a different perspective. Every day opens up a new possibility to change your view of everything that plays a part in your journey. This is a new set point, a new perspective. Even if you are not as proactive as an UPologist, and are travelling along life's journey 'asleep', technically you are still

evolving. The only reason most people can't see it is that they are not in control of their awareness, being wrapped up with things that are of no real value or with licking their wounds from an earlier beating. So for many, evolution feels like nothing more than the daily grind, rather than the key to understanding their greatness.

Imagine for a moment you are playing a game of cards — let's say it's Texas Hold'em — for the first time. You feel a bit clunky at first, having to ask for help, look at other people's cards, and have them explain what's happening with colours, patterns, numbers and so on, so for you the game feels awkward, even hard, as you're not really in flow. Now imagine you have played the game a thousand times. Your perspective is very different. The game has become second nature and an important evolution takes place.

The scope of the game has actually grown. It's now about much more than simply the game in hand and includes the bigger picture — the sum total of everything that makes up the Texas Hold'em experience, including the number of hands, the chips, the dealer, the cards, the atmosphere and everything else. And here's the kicker: the game is no longer about winning the hand; it has even evolved beyond winning the game to become about the experience of the game, the mindset behind it, the strategy and the mastery possible through conditioning. Everything the player has experienced up to this stage has an effect on the outcome, and in most cases a truly evolved player understands it's not about win or lose but about the game itself. Now the game is played with this end in mind, you know the bigger purpose and you understand your path to that destination. Everything hinges on your intention; and how you wish to play.

Evolution in business is just the same. Everything I have set out in this book is about the *game* of business, not about who has the most money or possessions or the biggest boat or house. It's not even about having a huge business; it's actually beyond that. These are simply some possible outcomes when all of the parts work together. Evolution in UPology is really about understanding that through following a

consistent set of principles, you have the ability to make a difference in your own life and in the lives of others, and your vehicle for this may be your business.

As you put into practice the ideas presented in this book you will quickly come to realise that you have begun your own transformation. This transformation will lead to your evolution. The more you evolve, the more you can help others around you evolve, in this way effectively playing a part in the evolution of all of us as a collective. Therefore, the infinite cycle continues.

The next phase of your journey is to advance the mastery process, refining yourself systematically, analysing what works for you and what doesn't. Key points to remember are that there's no rush and there's no right or wrong way of progressing, only a way that works best for you. Remember, you are cut from the same cloth that is the fabric of the universe, yet you are also unique — there's no one else quite like you.

Evolution involves developing yourself internally and externally, testing and retesting theories under pressure, asking yourself the kinds of questions that challenge you and drive you deeper:

What is my true purpose?

What growth have I achieved so far and how can I build on this?

How can I serve others?

It is my hope and belief that once you have begun the transformation in your life and/or business that I have outlined in this book, you will be eager to push the envelope in your quest to find your own true purpose and evolutionary path. I recommend you visit my website to find out about upcoming UPology events, coaching programs and masterminds, to learn about my next body of work, and to join the discussion through live forums.

I leave you with this question:

What if you 'woke up' from your dream to realise that all along you were already limitless, what would you do next?

Nick Psaila
www.UPologybook.com

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