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I can't let this moment go without thanking my social media followers and #byronites who support me unconditionally.

I would like to thank each and every one of you that has supported me along my journey.

I hope you all enjoy this book. We created this for YOU.

To your Success,

Byron – I live to Inspire

Bianca

Thank you to everyone who bought our first book, which resulted in the development of our 'Self Made' mentoring community. The feedback from our readers and mentees inspired us to write this book. We recognize now that there is so much that goes unwritten and unsaid about the realities (and perils) of being in business. Starting a business is one thing; surviving and thriving while running a business is very much another. You all helped me to see that and realize it is a reality

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To my parents, I am who I am because of you, and for that I will always be grateful. I love you both.

To my clients, I've been talking about 'intrapreneurship' for years. I am so pleased you have embraced it. Thank you for trusting me.

To everyone who is currently reading this, don't let anyone say you can't. You can AND you will!

Joint Thanks

We have so many friends and family, we would love to name you all but that would be impossible, so instead we would like to thank you all from the bottom of our hearts for your continuous love and support – you know who you are.

To our interviewees, industry experts, Martina, Trevor and everyone who helped us put this book together, we would like to extend a special thank you to you all. And to our team, who embrace our every business move.

Preface: Forget ‘Business as Usual’

There is no ‘usual’ in business. Each business has its own voice, narrative and capabilities, as do the people who are at its forefront. Whether you are reading this as a business owner, a budding entrepreneur, an employee dedicated to your career, or a student – you are the most important asset in any venture. And we have created this book for you, to help you understand the emotional roller-coaster of being in business and the ‘business of you’.

Business isn’t easy – it takes guts, it takes grit, it takes the odd tearful moment, but along with what might sometimes appear to be earth-shattering lows are the amazing highs that make it all worthwhile.

This is not a book that exists purely to tell you ‘yes, you can do it’. You already know if you can or can’t (and if you don’t, you will by the end of the book). Rather, this book tells you *how* to do it. It provides you with the coping mechanisms, strategies and support you need to make it happen.

Oh, and it will probably prove to you that you are not alone. Every emotion, feeling and issue you encounter has probably been experienced by every person around you . . . the difference being, we aren’t afraid to talk about it in this book. Business is hard, but we’re here to hold your hand on the rollercoaster.

So, here we go . . . we’re going to look at purpose, clarity, anxiety, procrastination, romantic conflict, sleep deprivation, imposter syndrome, and so much more. It will be emotional and sometimes difficult. It will also be a lot of fun. The secret is to know how to roll with the punches.

Join us on the journey. This is business as *unusual*.

Introduction

Running a company – particularly if it’s your first time – involves a steep learning curve.

And that’s OK. You’ve undoubtedly accepted that there will be an enormous amount to learn. You’re going to have to get to grips with market research, preparing a business plan, raising money to get you through the first few months, hiring staff, and a whole host of other things. Yes, you’ll be in uncharted territory, but you’ve got a pretty good idea of what’s involved. You know what to expect.

But we’re here to tell you that there will be surprises – not least because you’ll be learning a huge amount about yourself and how you handle difficult and often stressful situations. It’s this personal aspect of running a company that most business guides tend to ignore, sidestep or underplay.

On one level, that’s entirely understandable. If you’re starting out on the entrepreneurial road, you absolutely need to know how to construct a credible business plan, master sales, build a personal brand and set up the accounting systems that will keep the tax authorities happy. Equally, once the venture is up and running, it’s vital that you understand how to manage cash flow, build infrastructure or even prepare the business to be sold. We covered all of that and more in our first book, *Self Made*.

But the technical side of running a business only represents part of the story. As an entrepreneur, you are typically putting heart, soul and, very possibly, your life savings into your chosen venture. And that’s an emotional thing.

It's Emotional

From the day you launch, your company is the cause that you fight for. To make it a success, you'll work long hours, miss family events and have to live with the fact that the dividing line between a good and a bad outcome depends, to a very great extent, on your judgement.

Along the way, you'll face a whole range of obstacles – some of them relatively easy to negotiate, and others with the potential to run your dreams on to the rocks. You'll find that making the right call is not always easy. Indeed, it can be difficult even to see a situation clearly. Most likely, there will be times when it all seems too much. So much so that you feel like giving up, or spend months wrestling with insecurities and anxieties.

There is, however, almost always a way through.

That was a lesson we learned when putting together our first book – *Self Made: The Definitive Guide to Business Startup Success*. Written as a toolkit for entrepreneurs, it is an action-oriented guide for those who need as much information as possible about the mechanics of setting up a company. It was something of a labour of love, and an opportunity to give something back by sharing the knowledge and information we'd amassed over our years running successful companies.

But the journey from conception to bookshop shelves wasn't straightforward. We had a literary agent pitch the idea to a number of publishers – small and large – and initially failed to generate much interest. That could have been the end of the story, but it wasn't. Realizing that it was perfectly possible to self-publish, we decided to write *Self Made* anyway. In addition – and this was crucial – we also developed a business plan to ensure the book would sell and make money. Our plan A had morphed into plan B. We weren't going to give up.

Once the book was written, the situation changed again. With everything completed, we realized we now had something traditional

publishing houses wanted to buy. So, having put in the work, we were back on track with our original plan. The book got a publisher and went on to be a bestseller – not only in the UK, where we're based, but in many other places around the world.

The whole process reminded us that success is not just about having a great product that fills a gap in the market. You also need the mindset and sense of purpose that will see you through when it seems the whole world is saying no.

In a very real way, the story of the *Self Made* journey contained the seeds of the book that you are about to read. Rather than being a startup guide, this is a survival kit – one that will tell you what it's really like to pursue a business dream. Looking beyond processes, best practices and quantifiable skills, this book focuses on the personality, drive and inner toughness required by the entrepreneur. It is about facing difficulties, making decisions – very often hard ones – and overcoming self-doubt and other deep-seated emotions that can hold you back.

It's also about relationships with people. No entrepreneur is an island. Even if your business consists of just you and a laptop, you'll be talking to customers and suppliers, probably on a daily basis. If you run a bigger company, you may have one or more partners and possibly also investors, in addition to a team of employees. In all cases, there are relationships to be managed, and inevitably there will be times when not everyone is in agreement or alignment. Managing people, and conflict, is an important part of an entrepreneur's life.

As is crisis management. Witness the Covid-19 pandemic. This was something that most of the world just didn't see coming. In the space of a few short months, a functional global economy was brought to its knees. Near the beginning of the crisis, 3.9 billion people (or half the world's population) were in lockdown, according to United Nations figures.

For many small businesses, the economic meltdown came out of the blue. There was no warning. And yet, even in the hardest-hit sectors, we saw resilience. Restaurants pivoted to takeaway and

home delivery businesses. Training companies moved from physical sessions, with dozens of people gathered together in a room, to the safety of video conferencing via Zoom, Google or Microsoft Teams. Retailers stepped up their mail-order businesses. Where possible, owners, managers and the wider workforce stayed at home, but carried on working.

It would be wrong to say that every agile and innovative business managed to survive, but it's certainly true that those which were prepared to adapt and pivot had a much greater chance of navigating a course through the obstacles of the pandemic.

Mindset

It's tempting to think that a successful mindset is something intrinsic to the individual – to assume that while some people have a will to overcome hurdles, others give up when faced by adversity. That it's just who they are, after all.

In reality, our personalities and personal attributes are not set in stone. We can all take steps to improve the way we respond to situations and interact with those around us. To put it another way, we can all develop and grow. We can all make ourselves better entrepreneurs.

This book will provide you with the information you need. Every challenge that you'll face as you grow your business has been experienced by other entrepreneurs. You won't be the first to lose a major customer. The economic downturn generated by the pandemic was unprecedented but there have been numerous recessions in the post-war years, including the great financial crash of 2007–2008. In the face of adversity, businesses survived and even thrived.

At a less dramatic level, a great many entrepreneurs have struggled with walking into a crowded room to network with complete strangers. Equally, there is no shortage of entrepreneurs who have wrestled with the stresses caused by success, perhaps from finding themselves running businesses that are bigger and more complicated than they ever intended.

Introduction

There is no need to reinvent the wheel every time you face a challenge. There are plenty of existing strategies, tactics and life hacks that will help you realize your dream. We're here to show you what they are.

How to Use This Book

At the core of this book is our dual experience as entrepreneurs – each pursuing our own business ambitions while supporting the other. To reflect those twin perspectives, each of us has taken the lead in writing separate chapters. It's an approach that has allowed our individual voices to come through, while avoiding the trap of writing chapters by committee. Perhaps more importantly, it has allowed us to emphasize aspects of business life that have particularly engaged us as individuals, while also highlighting the experiences that are common to just about every entrepreneur.

This is not intended to be a coffee-table book – although you are more than welcome to leave it on a table or in some other prominent position. Nor is it intended to be read once and then filed away on a bookshelf, never to be seen again.

Quite the opposite. This is a practical guide to help you at every stage of your entrepreneurial journey. It is packed with exercises, entrepreneur insights, tools, techniques and other thought-provoking content. Read it through once and you'll get a lot out of it, but we suggest that you keep it at hand. And what we really want you to do is refer to it constantly, thumb through it, bend back the pages, make notes in the margins. In five years' time, if it's lying on your desk looking a bit ragged and the worse for wear, with some of the pages coming away from the binding, we won't hold it against you. In fact, we'll take it as a compliment. The book will have done its job in helping you to better understand yourself, your stakeholders and how to steer your business through good, bad and perhaps chaotic times.

Read and Reread

Ideally, you should start out by reading the book in the order it was written; this approach will provide the best overview of some of the challenges that lie ahead. But don't feel you have to. Business is not linear. Everyone hits bumps in the road, but not everyone experiences the same obstacles at identical points on the entrepreneurial journey. So if you are faced with a particular problem, find the relevant chapter and jump right in. After that, you can go back to reading in sequence.

Take Notes

It can be a bit too easy to read a book on Monday and forget most of the main points by Friday. The best way to engage is to become an active reader. Take notes. It doesn't matter whether you jot them down in the margins, keep a separate journal or write them on a Post-it which you then attach to the page. The main thing is that you are interacting. This not only helps you to remember the content but also allows you to add your own thoughts and experiences, making the book's insights more relevant.

Remember to have some paper to hand too. We've included a range of exercises throughout the book, designed to help you crystallize your thoughts as a way of preparing for action. But it's important to remember that every business is different. If you come across an exercise that doesn't square with your experiences, feel free to adapt it – again, make it relevant.

It's also well worth revisiting the exercises as your business grows and changes. To give you an example – goal setting is a constant in business. Today, you might be aiming for a £50,000 turnover, and to achieve that you'll need to set a series of goals to help you reach that ambition. But what happens when you hit £50,000? Then you'll need new goals, strategies and tactics. You can use our goal-setting template again and again.

Introduction

Social Media

Don't keep your insights to yourself. As you move forward with the help of this book, share your progress, your experiences and your ups and downs on social media. Other people will want to know. And, guess what, you'll build a community that can only help you to achieve your ambitions in the longer term.

Stay in Touch

We want to know about your progress too, so don't forget to stay in touch with us. We would really like to hear stories of your self-made journey and how this survival guide has helped you.

You can connect with us on:

Instagram: Bianca: @biancamilleroofficial; Byron: @mrbselfmade; and the community on @selfmadebookuk.

Podcast platforms/YouTube: The Self Made Book Channel is available for free across all platforms.

Email: Office@selfmadebook.uk – If you have any feedback or wish to share your journey with us, we would love to hear from you, so please do send us an email. Our favourite part of writing books, mentoring and delivering workshops is being able to hear people's success stories, so we would love to hear from you about how the book has helped along your journey.

Website: www.selfmadebook.uk – This is where you will find lots of free business resources, event listings, details about our mentoring programme, and access to our online courses.

Chapter One

Define Your Purpose

*'If you can't figure out your purpose, figure out your passion.
For your passion will lead you right into your purpose.'*

– T. D. Jakes

You're an aspiring entrepreneur. You're launching a business. For the moment at least, your course is set.

But I've got some news for you. While this may be your first business venture, it almost certainly won't be your last. At some time in the future, you may well start a second business, and then a third. In the meantime, as you move forward with your current venture, things will evolve. Inevitably, you will adapt your plan and perhaps even pivot to a completely new business model, as circumstances and your own assessment of the opportunities change. In two years' time, you may not have the same business that you started out with. It could be (almost) unrecognizable.

Byron and I see this with our mentees all the time. They come to us with a carefully developed business concept. As we work with them, their plan develops and ultimately morphs into something that is often completely different.

This process of change and adaptation is necessary and positive, but it can lead to a period of uncertainty and perhaps self-doubt. As you ring the changes, you might well ask yourself: 'Is this what I signed up for – is this the right business for me?' This could be a recurring question. It's certainly something you should ask yourself at the beginning of your entrepreneurial journey, when you are thinking about how to turn your idea into a fully fledged and profitable venture.

Later, when your business has been up and running for a while, you may well pause for breath and say: 'Hold on, this isn't the business

I started with. Is this something I want to go on doing?’ Further down the line, as your business grows and you have an opportunity to expand and take on more staff, you will find yourself faced with unfamiliar challenges – for instance, running a twenty-strong team when at the beginning it was just you and a partner. You’ll need to ask yourself if this is what you wanted or expected when you started out – or has it grown into something that is stressing you out rather than making you happy?

You Always Have Options

Here’s the good news: as an entrepreneur you always have options. If you don’t think a business plan is quite right, you can change it. If the business is moving in a direction you’re uncomfortable with, you can alter the course. *You* are in the driving seat. You have choices.

Let’s look at an example. The entrepreneurial boom that has taken place over the past decade has focused attention on a certain kind of business – one that could be characterized as a ‘build and sell’ venture. Essentially, we’re talking about founders who start out with the express aim of selling the business at some point in the future, so their priority is to grow revenues very quickly, which in turn pushes up the value of the company ahead of their exit. To finance the growth plan, the owner will often sell shares in the business to venture capitalists (VCs) or angel investors, who are also keen to cash in via an exit.

It’s easy to see why this kind of company attracts the attention of the media. Everyone loves to hear about big numbers, whether that’s 25 per cent annual growth, a £500,000 investment or a £15 million sale. Figures like this make for big, sexy stories that speak of the dynamism of not only the founders but also the investors. In contrast, ‘lifestyle’ businesses that make a profit and do pretty well, but not spectacularly, attract very little attention. Indeed, they can even be disparaged.

And that’s wrong. A successful business can be anything you

Define Your Purpose

want it to be. If your goal is to grow, take investment, and cash in for a life-changing sum of money, that's absolutely great. But it's equally fine if you simply want to make a good living, work the business for most of your life and pass it on to your family. The choice is yours. You have an opportunity to be the entrepreneur that you always dreamed of being.

Paul Jarvis sums it up well. Based in Canada, he is co-founder of Fathom, a relatively small but very successful privacy analytics company. In addition, he is author of *Company of One*, a book that makes the case for staying small. He stresses the importance of making choices that are right for the individual. 'Success is personal,' he says. 'I didn't want to go after someone else's version of success. I didn't want to be like Elon Musk. He has a couch in his office where he sleeps at night. I also have a couch, but that's so I can take a nap from time to time.' Crucially, Jarvis's own lifestyle goals have dictated the kind of business he runs.

We can all do this. The key to getting it right is to find your purpose.

Is This Business Right for Me?

Let's take a closer look at the core question – namely 'Is this business right for me?' It seems simple, but there's actually a lot to consider.

You could express the answer purely in terms of viability. Will this business not only survive but flourish? For instance, is there a fit between the product and the market? Is the market big enough to generate a sufficient profit? In other words, you need to address some important commercial questions. And if the business plan simply doesn't add up, clearly it won't be the right venture.

But beyond viability, there is something more personal to think about. Maybe the venture will be a rip-roaring success, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's something you should be pursuing. There are plenty of people who have successful careers – as lawyers,

board-level executives, doctors – but who would dearly love to do something different. Maybe they were pushed into those jobs by parents, or made choices based on their best subjects at school. Or perhaps they took the first job they could after leaving education, stuck with it and did well. But, at heart, they would rather be developing a career that offers more meaning.

It's the same in business. You can build a company that is financially a success – and who would argue with wanting that – and yet feel that you would rather be on a different course. And, actually, you might be more successful if you truly follow your own vision. For instance, there could be two identical entrepreneurial businesses, both selling the same product to broadly the same group of target customers. One flourishes, the other struggles. What differentiates them? In all probability, it is the passion, commitment and talent of the owners, rather than anything about the product itself. The fit between owner and business is important.

Why Purpose Matters

In addition to considering the commercial potential of a venture, it is vital to reflect on how the business sits with you as an individual. How does it map on to the person you are? Is this something that you can see yourself doing not just for two or three years, but for the long haul? That's important, because businesses can take years to fulfil their full potential.

So, ask yourself:

- Why do I want to start a business?
- What is my purpose as an individual?
- What is the purpose of the business, and how does it align with my purpose?

At this point, you might conclude that the answer is simple. Your purpose is to make money. The business exists to make money. It's