

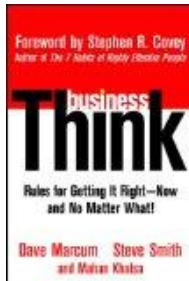
The Entrepreneurial Mindset: 8 Rules for Getting it Right

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Your business will only achieve its true potential when you begin to "think business." By adopting the right entrepreneurial mindset, you can improve your chances for success and avoid suffering a similar fate as that of 550,000 small firms that closed operations last year, as reported by the U.S. Small Business Administration

Small and home-based businesses fall by the wayside for a variety of reasons. Caused by factors such as, under-capitalization, miscalculated market potential, ineffective marketing to poor management and operation. For whatever reason, owners of these businesses have failed to think creatively and strategically to allow their businesses to overcome the challenges that came along the way.

Dr. Paul Nutt, a professor at Ohio State University's Fischer College of Business, conducted a 19-year study that tracked the success rate of decisions made by executives and managers at 356 different companies. His study showed that more than 50 percent of all decisions failed; they were quickly abandoned, only partially implemented, or never adopted at all. Executives never considered alternatives once they made up their mind, while many decisions reflected an egotistical take-charge approach. Hence, it is no wonder that many business decisions failed, and initiatives collapsed.



A new book by Dave Marcum, Steve Smith and Mahan Khalsa entitled "**businessThink**" could help improve your chances for success by providing you with simple and easy steps to adopt a winning entrepreneurial mindset. Unlike other business books that are either too theoretical or technical, "**businessThink**" gives you ideas on what to do day-to-day. According to the authors, **businessThink** will "give you the business tools to transform what you think about, and how you ultimately decide what you should be doing, and eliminate the distraction of what you could be doing."

Once you start a business, you will constantly be bombarded by the pressure to get it right - make the right decisions, get the right funding, create the best marketing strategy, or hire the right persons. You will discover that the written rules and language of business that learned in business school are dramatically different from the real-world way of doing business. It is therefore essential that you develop a business instinct that would allow you to immediately sense what works and what doesn't before you spend the time, money and effort to really find out.

The core of the book is the 8 rules the authors propose to help cultivate in you a fundamentally new way of thinking, communicating and business decision-making. The authors present these rules to create a framework for cultivating this different thought process, giving you skills for thinking through decisions and day-to-day issues that your business faces.

Rule One: Check Your Ego at the Door

Have you ever heard yourself say, "This is my business; I'll do whatever I want with it!" According to the authors, getting rid of this attitude is the first step to changing your business for the better.

You do not need arrogance, defensiveness, or a desperate need for approval in your quest for entrepreneurial success, as these behaviors can only shut down dialogue, opportunities and decisions. The authors point out that "humility clears the path to solutions." You may be brilliant, but you need to realize that you do not know everything; in fact, no one does. Hence, you may need collaboration and inputs from other people, which you can only maximize if you set your ego aside.

In **businessThink** mode, you also have to stop thinking in black or white. The business world is not either-this-or-that; or a go-or-no-go world. Instead, you need to learn how to explore every option in between, including every imaginable exception.

Rule Two: Create Curiosity

According to the authors, "curiosity is the driving force behind business thinking." Curiosity provides you the motivation to seek out new options, opens your minds and creates an atmosphere of asking "what if" questions that get to the heart of the matter.

What you currently know sometimes gets in the way of what you need to know, but don't know. Hence, you need to develop the kind of curiosity that goes beyond asking about facts and data gathering. Instead, you need to ask questions that dig into possibilities, outcomes and options. For your creativity to produce outstanding results, you need to first learn as much as possible outside your own knowledge and expertise. Be a sponge for information and use it to refresh your experience and knowledge rather than allowing yourself to feel as if new information puts you at risk.

Rule Three: Move Off the Solution

Don't prematurely focus on the solution itself and find "quick fixes" to your problems. Focus and clarify the issues first. You need to get to the underlying business issues, evidence and financial impact on the company, and work from there. Remember, a solution is worthless unless and until it creates business value, prevents a problem or invents a new result the business needs. Otherwise, a solution is merely an event.

Rule Four: Get Evidence

To clarify the problem, you need to ask the following questions: What proves you have a problem? What? How? When? Where? Who? Then start searching, digging and looking for evidence.

Some of the best businesspeople ask the obvious questions, the answers to, which are almost never obvious. In fact, it's the obvious questions or the politically sensitive questions that many are afraid to ask. Collect soft evidence and then turn it into hard evidence that the business can measure.

Rule Five: Calculate the Impact

One cardinal rule you need to abide by is to weigh every investment against its return. What is the impact, financially or strategically, of this decision on your business?

You must never let cash out the door that doesn't strictly ultimately bring more cash back. Any expense - whether technology, training, equipment, advertising - should be eliminated if it will not contribute either to increasing revenue or decreasing costs. You also need to identify benchmarks to help you determine and measure your success.

Rule Six: Explore the Ripple Effect

More than calculating the financial impact of a business decision, you must always ask yourself, "Who else will be affected by my decision?" You may want to know how the current problem or the opportunity under consideration could affect your life, your family, or your employees. Never lose sight of the big picture of the business as a whole.

Rule Seven: Slow Down For Yellow Lights

If the problem or opportunity is so big, ask what has stopped you in the past from doing something about it, and what could stop you in the future. Watch out for possible obstacles. If you get a yellow light early, take your best shot at resolving it. Even if you fail and get to a red light, you'll have saved time and money at the very least.

Rule Eight: Find the Cause

Simply asking why will give you the tools to dig for the underlying reason for the problems, and to make sure you're treating the source, rather than the effects. Having proof you need a solution (the effects), and knowing what solution you need are two different things. You need to understand the underlying truths. Ask yourself the questions: Why is this happening? Are these symptoms or causes?

Once you have internalized these eight rules, you have equipped the most important asset of your business - your mind - to think business.