'What a revelation this book is. The *E-Myth* gave the world the idea to "work *on* your business not in it". Now Nigel and Martin have given us the *how* to do it'

Martin Norbury, The Scalability Coach

BUILD YOUR BUSINESS IN 90 MINUTES A DAY

NIGEL BOTTERILL AND MARTIN GLADDISH

'Nigel constantly goes on about his 90 minutes and now I know why!! As soon as I started doing my 90 minutes my business went ballistic. Doing my 90 minutes consistently is the main reason why we have doubled in size in the last year. I now realize why it's so important. The impact it has is astounding. FACT: If you're not doing your 90 minutes regularly, you're leaving money on the table.'

—Mark Hammond, Abacus Party Cover

'What a revelation this book is. The E-Myth gave the world the *idea* to "work on your business, not in it". Now Nigel has given us the *how* to do it.'

—Martin Norbury, The Scale Coach

'I've learned many things from Nigel over the years but the most significant was how to build a super successful business – 90 minutes at a time. It's brilliant.'

—David Browne, Scottish Shutter Company

'90 minutes has become my secret weapon for finding new customers, keeping them happy and growing my business. It really works.'

—Lucinda Dawes, Big Copy Studio

'The most precious – and impactful – time of day for any business owner is the 90 minutes. It's the time when you work on your business and not in it; that's what the 90 minutes is all about.'

—Mitch Lloyd, Petra Jewellery

'It's the satisfaction of knowing that I've just spent a concentrated 90 minutes growing my business.'

—Andi Hill Captain Rug Wash, Plymouth Rug Cleaning

'What a great book. It articulates the simplest but most powerful of concepts and really makes a difference. We've made huge progress since implementing 90 minutes.'

—Keith Edmunds, Tiger Computing

'For me, it's 6.30am to 8am every morning. That precious time when I can absolutely guarantee my business is growing.'

—Richard Curtis, The Root Of It

'My 90 minutes is now the time I look forward to most as a business owner, it's when I know for sure that I'll be growing my business.'

—Shaun Walker, Nibbletech

'Nigel's passion for helping small businesses grow is immense. His guidance and encouragement, and the discipline to stick to my 90-minute regime, has made a massive difference to our business.'

—Barry Allaway, Group Managing Director, WWMD

'Nigel describes himself as a "shy, retiring Yorkshireman", when in fact what he is, is a Translator. He takes all of the business jargon, hyperbole and waffle and distils it into common sense nuggets that any business owner can implement for themselves. As he is the first to admit, there is no magic pill to transform a business, but by listening to Nigel, and following his advice (in particular his 90-minute strategy) you can't help but see rapid growth and stellar results.'

—Liz Baranov, Rickaby & Co

Praise for the Entrepreneur's Circle

'I've been a member of the Entrepreneur's Circle for nearly 5 years, and although I've run a business for over 18 years – employing 24 staff – Nigel's teaching and training has enabled us to transform our performance and growth. My only criticism is "why the hell didn't you set up the EC 15 years ago!"'

—Graham Hill, Verbatim

'We're £20,000 up on the last quarter as a result of what we've learned from Nigel and the EC.'

—Pauline Davidson, Partners Hair & Beauty

'Our turnover is up by 500% in the last year thanks to Entrepreneur's Circle and Nigel's teachings.'

—Jaroslaw Wolak, Lopa Removals

'After being a member of EC for just 4 weeks I'd increased my sales by £40,000 and we're well on track now to be a £1m business.'

—Nik Allen, My News Mag

'Since joining EC and learning the power of 90 minutes, I've got so much done that our turnover this year is up by 350% and we should be a million-pound company by the end of the year.'

—Stuart Miles, Smiles Centre

'What I've learnt from Nigel and the EC now accounts for thousands of extra cash in the business every month.'

—Adam Butler, Easy Online Recruitment

'Joining the EC and doing what Nigel says, helped me put 12 years of ideas into action – and within a few weeks we'd won a new £50,000 contract.'

—Lucy Barry, Flair Dance Academy

'The amount of new business and profit I get off the back of being involved with the Entrepreneur's Circle is incredible.'

—Mike Loughton, Sir Tax Accountants

'Since joining EC and learning from Nigel we've more than doubled our turnover and increased profits massively.'

—Kate Lester, Diamond Logistics

'With the help of Nigel and the EC we now turnover £400,000 with a team of 7, all from a standing start just four years ago.'

—James Sheard, The Accountancy People

'Nigel's team are brilliant, and since joining EC three years ago our profit has doubled year-on-year, and our turnover is now 800% higher than when we started. I'm so glad I got involved.'

—Tracy Irwin, TI Payroll

'Following Nigel's advice, I've seen a 40% uplift in profits since joining the Entrepreneur's Circle – and it's getting stronger.'

—Alice Jackson, Madson Interim Solutions

'I wish I'd known about the Entrepreneur's Circle years ago. The service is second to none, they keep me on track and they really do care.'

—Adam Payne, TCMUK

Build Your Business in 90 Minutes A Day

Build Your Business in 90 Minutes A Day

Nigel Botterill
Martin Gladdish



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'For all the members of the Entrepreneur's Circle who do their 90 minutes every day...

...we salute you.'

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HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

The stories and lessons contained within the rich array of pages you hold in your hand have been laid out in a carefully planned order. Each one in turn has its own little gem or treasure trove of wisdom to reveal to you, and by way of introduction to the individual sections you will see that they are headed by one of the following five themes:

 90 minutes that changed the world

 The science of 90 minutes

 Your 90-minutes-a-day stories

 Practical 90-minutes guidelines

 The 90-minute fact file

INTRODUCTION

Time is indisputably the most precious resource available to today's busy entrepreneurs. The wisest amongst them would pay a high price for more of it. Yet despite the fact that time itself is absolute and there is no way for us to create more, many smart people still strive to fill the time they have with 'busyness', rather than using it to enhance their productivity. Whatever strategy or strategies you've been employing to get your business to where it is today, there is no doubt that it would be in an even better position if you had more time available to you.

But what if a 'type of' additional time was available and delivered to you in a manner that saw you at your most productive, brilliant best each day? Imagine what a difference that would make!

Well, that is exactly what this book has been designed to reveal to you. So hold tight as we take you back through the richness of antiquity, blast you up to the edge of space and walk you through the lives of some extraordinary people to discover the secrets that lie within the time you already have. We

promise you adventure, intrigue, science and real-life, proven wisdom that might just change your life forever. So read on and enjoy the journey.

This book has been designed to be read in 90 minutes.

In fact, we conceived, planned and pitched the idea for this book during a 90-minute chunk of time, and wrote it across a series of pre-planned 90-minute time slots. In it, we share amazing stories of how the great and the good changed history in the space of just 90 minutes. It even delves into the science behind such achievements.

Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, it gives insight and education into the 90-minute milestones that led to success and new horizons for business owners just like you and me. If you are prepared to test and take on board its message, it will help you to find and use 90 minutes of quality time each and every day to build your business.

We sincerely hope that you embrace its lessons, enjoy its wonderful stories and are inspired by all of its other content and contributors.

– Nigel and Martin

PART ONE

The Start, the Science and Seven Stories of Success . . .

HOW IT ALL STARTED

It was a B-I-G step when I started out in business on my own in January 2003. No one in my family had ever been an entrepreneur. We were police officers, carpenters, Methodist ministers or dinner ladies.

I was 36 when I launched my company. For 20 years prior to that I'd forged what could be described as a successful corporate career – firstly with Barclays, then with John Caudwell at Phones4U and finally at CPP in York.

I'll never forget my first morning as an entrepreneur. My wife Sue had taken our three children off to school and I had commuted the 15 stairs to the back bedroom – home of my new empire. With the house completely silent, the first thought that struck me was, 'What have I done?'

You see, we had a nice life. Nice cars, nice house, nice holidays. I'd earned a big six-figure salary with chunky bonuses – and I was putting it all on the line to pursue the 'dream' of building my own

consultancy business. The responsibility weighed heavily on my shoulders that day – as it still does today – but it fired within me a determination to succeed. I wanted to prove to all the doubters who thought I was crazy to walk away from a 'safe secure job' that I could do this. To build something special. Something meaningful. Something big. To make a real difference in the world. I was aiming high.

Sue and I had a plan. Well, more of a target – with a deadline. We made a deal that I had to earn £100,000 for us (i.e. profit) in my first year in order to keep the business. If I succeeded, I'd carry on. If I failed, I'd get a job whilst I was still employable. I was blissfully ignorant of what it would take to earn £100k profit – which was undoubtedly a good thing.

So, we remortgaged our house (something relatively easy to do back then) and freed up some capital that we could live off for a few months whilst I built our fortune.

And I got off to a pretty good start.

I was smart enough in those early days to recognize that my biggest weakness was that everything I'd learned in corporate life – which had helped me to succeed in climbing the greasy pole – was of no use whatsoever when it comes to running your own business. So I looked around for help. I knew that

I wasn't the first person to make this transition, so I set out to find people who had made the journey before and who could help me.

One such gentleman was named Martin Howey. He used to come round to my house every couple of weeks and give me the benefit of his wisdom and expertise. I guess you could call it mentoring – but we never did.

Three months in to my new venture, Martin was sitting in my lounge with a cup of tea when he asked me: 'What's the most important thing you've got to do for this business of yours to succeed?'

Now, that's one of those awful questions, and I flip-flopped around a bit before settling on my answer of 'getting and keeping customers'. I said: 'If I get and keep enough customers then one way or the other, everything else will get taken care of.'

'I think you're right,' said Martin.

Phew, I thought.

'So when are you getting and keeping customers today then?'

I looked puzzled. I'd had a busy morning, doing work for clients, handling some inbound calls, opening the post, going to the bank, processing

some invoices. I hadn't had any time to 'get and keep clients'.

'But surely,' said Martin, 'any sane sensible person, once they understood what the single most important thing for their business was – especially when it's the most important thing in your life right now, which I know it is – would have some time set aside each day to *do* that single most important thing?'

I felt a twit. I mean, properly stupid.

He was right, of course. I had very big plans. I was driven and determined to succeed. But after just three months as an entrepreneur, I'd become consumed by the 'busyness' of the day-to-day and lost sight of the critical actions I needed to take daily if I was to achieve my goals.

So, stung into action by Martin's hugely impactful insight, I began a habit the very next day – one that has stayed with me ever since.

I'm a morning person. I'm at my most productive and sharpest the minute I get out of bed and my productivity slides gradually into oblivion as the day goes on. By the evening my capacity to do good work has virtually disappeared. So, the very next morning I went upstairs to my office and for the first 90 minutes I didn't open emails or do work

for clients – I focused, first thing, on doing some of the things that would make my business more successful.

And 12 years on I still do that every single day.

In between times my team and I have built nine separate million-pound businesses right here in the UK. We've won armfuls of awards – including some of the most prestigious available – and if you were to look back at how we've done it, you'd find that we've built them all in 90-minute chunks.

90 minutes every morning

I usually get to the office around 7:30am and I work, uninterrupted and uninterruptible, in the perfect environment for me. I concentrate for 90 minutes every morning on the things that will make my business more successful – that will get and keep customers. There are many examples of these activities sprinkled generously amidst the stories in this book, with a list of the key ones, which I use in my daily 90-minute sessions, right at the end.

This means that I can emerge, blinking into the sun(!), at around 9/9:15am and face whatever the day throws at me – because I've done the single most important thing.

And that's what this book is all about.

I've never been secretive or shy about sharing this daily discipline to which I attribute such a lot of our success. And it turns out that lots of other entrepreneurs and business owners have enjoyed similar successes once they've embraced the habit.

It was another Martin, Martin Gladdish, who originally had the idea for this book. Having listened to me tell my story and embraced the lessons himself, he believed that more people should know about 90-minute chunks and the difference they can make. So off he went to work on uncovering scientific research that explains why 90 minutes is so important. Then he researched some incredible stories from history of how 90-minute chunks have genuinely changed the world. *Then* he persuaded me to map out exactly what I do in my 90 minutes, how I think about those sessions and the ingredients necessary to ensure that they make the most impact. Finally, he wrote a note for me to send to all the members of my Entrepreneur's Circle asking them for their stories about how 90-minute chunks had helped them. Nothing prepared me for the scale of their response – or the difference that it had made. Some of the hundreds of stories we received are interwoven into these pages. I hope you'll find them helpful as well as interesting and perhaps inspiring.

As with so many things in life, the principle of 90 minutes is very simple.

Getting it right and using 90-minute chunks to totally transform your business and your lifestyle needs some proper thought and effective implementation. But I promise you it's possible and within relatively easy reach.

Simply read on, and you'll see how.



THE FOUNDATIONS OF A GREAT NATION BUILT IN 90-MINUTE CHUNKS

Some 200 years before '1066 and all that', the nation that we know today as Great Britain was being planned, presided over and fought for by the only English monarch to ever be given the title 'The Great'. And he did it by meticulously segregating his day into small chunks of time.

Alfred the Great was born into the royal household in Wantage, Oxfordshire, in 849, the fifth son of Aethelwulf, King of Wessex. By the time he was made king in 871, he had already forged a reputation as a great warrior and administrator (think of him as an early Vladimir Putin), fighting off the invading Great Heathen Army and assisting his older brothers in their kingships.

Alfred's regal reputation, and the reason for his grandiose title, will always be associated with his military brilliance, totally restructuring the country's legal system, his commitment to education and his selfless efforts to improve his people's quality of life (perhaps not so Vladimir Putin after all).

The first ever 90-minute chunk timer

But it is the secret of how Alfred managed to achieve so much during his 28-year reign – and how he was able to lay the foundations of a great nation whilst continually fighting (physically, politically and religiously) against the Vikings – that is of the greatest interest to us as entrepreneurs. During this time, he also suffered from a painful, highly-debilitating and untreatable condition, now thought to have been Crohn's disease, which significantly reduced his activity and ability to concentrate for long periods of time.

Despite a lifetime wrought with personal hardship, war and opposition, Alfred's remarkable achievements were made possible through an inspirational timekeeping idea that originated in China in the sixth century. And being the brilliant innovator and leader that he was, he turned this early scientific breakthrough into a powerful planning strategy.

Alfred the Great created the first ever 90-minute chunk timer using candles.

His candle clock consisted of six candles of uniform diameter and each measuring exactly 12 inches high, made from 72 pennyweights of wax. The candles were marked at every inch and had been timed to burn for four hours in total, so each mark represented 20 minutes of time. It's widely reported that Alfred would usually work on each separate project for four or five 20-minute chunks at a time – in other words, an average of 90 minutes.

This ingenious device and an unquenchable thirst for education and achievement underpinned the colossal amount of organizational and planning work that made Alfred so famous. This discipline became a part of his daily routine, enabling him to repair castles, restore life to ruined cities, set up civic governments, revise the laws of the kingdom, fight wars, negotiate international politics, commit time to personal learning and apply sweeping reform throughout a rapidly growing nation.

A staggering legacy born out of 90-minute discipline

Alfred's responsibilities were so vast that it is hard to imagine how it would be possible for someone today,

even with our gadgets and technology, to achieve all that he managed to do. He was able to build a nation without the aid of computers, in a world where even parchment was a scarce and valuable resource, and the ability to write was a rarity. He did it through pure organizational discipline and exceptional time management – and his legacy is quite staggering.

In short, without his candle clock, Alfred would never have been called 'Great' and, potentially, neither would Britain.

It's just a shame he never used his candles to measure the time it took to bake cakes….



THE AMAZING 90-MINUTE SCIENCE OF BIORHYTHMS AND ULTRADIAN RHYTHMS

There is a growing body of scientific evidence being accumulated in the area of biorhythms, which indicates that various systems within the human body reach peaks and dips in regular cycles. A number of well-documented studies dating back from the late nineteenth century right through to the present day have concluded that there are, in essence, three primary human biorhythmic cycles (a conclusion that the ancient Greeks seemed to have reached 3,000 years earlier). The three primary biorhythmic cycles are:

1. A 23-day cycle, which dictates elements of the human physiology.
2. Our perception, emotion and creativity will tend to ebb and flow every 28 days.

3. Anything to do with our intellect, attention and memory or common-sense functionality will be affected over a period of 33 days.

In each of these reoccurring sequences a person will tend to function at lower or peak rates depending on their position within each particular cycle.



90 minutes of low calorie horror

Did you know that watching horror films can help you lose weight? A study at a London University showed that the adrenaline buzz induced by scary movies increases the heart rate and breathing patterns to such an extent that a 90-minute film can see you use up an average of 113 calories. That means that if you ate a bar of chocolate during the film you would gain no weight at all. An average viewer watching the 1980 classic *The Shining* could use up as much as 184 calories – that's a bar and a half.

Business lesson

It is a scary concept for many business owners to spend money to make money. The idea of paying someone else a lower hourly rate than they are looking to earn to do jobs like bookkeeping, filing, answering phones, managing diaries and other low-level tasks seems to strike terror into people. They say things like 'Why should I pay someone else to do things that I can do myself? How does that make business sense?' but, of course, they are wrong. Outsourcing time-consuming, low-skilled tasks would, in actual fact, free up their time to go and do far more valuable things that are worthy of any entrepreneur's time. So, facing the fear of outsourcing is a bit like enjoying guilt-free chocolate, or having your cake and eating it.

Ultradian rhythms and 90-minute optimization

We're learning more about these cycles all the time, and constant discoveries are being made. But within its many tests and studies there is an increasingly large body of compelling evidence to support the fact that shorter-term cycles also exist. One of the most interesting of these concerns the human capacity to concentrate, operate at its optimum level and recuperate after mental exercise. This area of science is known as the study of *ultradian rhythms*, or the measure of repeated levels of cyclical biological human activity within any given day. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ultradian as 'a rhythm or cycle having a period of recurrence shorter than a day but longer than an hour'.

A good night's sleep means dreaming of success . . .

One of the best known and most widely-researched ultradian cycles is the area of REM, or rapid eye movement sleep – the period of our sleep cycle when we dream. We owe much of what we know today about this subject to Russian physiologist and sleep researcher Nathaniel Kleitman, who was born in Kishinev in April 1895. His highly practical and

often self-inflicted research – aided by one of his students, Eugene Aserinsky – led to the discovery and identification in 1953 of the sleep phenomenon known as REM. But this was only part of his wider study into the whole area of human sleep activity, which he called Basic Rest-Activity Cycle, known as BRAC – a widely-used term today.

BRAC describes the five stages of sleep that make up a successful seven and a half hour rest period, from light sleep to deep sleep and out again. In ideal scenarios, each of these five periods should last approximately 90 minutes. It is now commonly held as a medical fact that interference of these sleep patterns can have a significantly negative effect on a person, leading them to feel tired, irritable and unable to perform at their optimum level during the day.

The long-term effects can lead to depression or other mind and energy-related illnesses. Basically, regular sleep patterns are essential for the health of all human beings. And these usually take place in five 90-minute chunks during a good night's sleep (the Basic Rest-Activity Cycle). There is even a sector of sleep science that suggests that a power nap during the day should be either less than 20 minutes – that is, before you enter the first sleep

cycle – or over 90 minutes, taking up a full cycle. Otherwise it will leave you feeling even drowsier than when you started.

Could 90-minute living lead to longer lives?

Perhaps this emerging area of scientific study, which is constantly revealing more secrets about the way our minds function, is the reason that our brains seem to continue working while we sleep. Many of the great thinkers – those that are constantly on the lookout for solutions and opportunities – regularly testify that the answers they seek seem nestled at the front of their minds after a good night's sleep. The expression 'I'll sleep on it' may well have more weight than previously believed. Perhaps the snug security of eiderdown and counting sheep really can release dreams into reality.

Dr Kleitman also noted that these 90-minute patterns seem to appear in our daytime or awakened hours as well, and that the levels of concentration would peak and then slowly diminish throughout these cycles. Many subsequent studies also support this idea and repeatedly reveal that 90 minutes is the optimum time for human concentration. It is very, very hard to stay 'in the zone' and concentrate effectively for longer than 90 minutes. But those 90-minute chunks – used effectively and in the right

environment – can become a powerhouse of productivity that can dramatically move your business forward when practised regularly.

Kleitman was a scientific man with a lifelong interest – indeed, a borderline obsession – in the subject of sleep and human rhythms; as such he practised what he found and preached in his day-to-day life. Whether as a result of his habits or by pure dream-like coincidence it is very hard to say, but 90-minute living clearly made a massive impact on Nathaniel Kleitman. He died peacefully in his sleep in August 1999 at 104 years old!

Think at your peak, and rest in the valley

Other studies include that of Professor K. Anders Ericson of Florida State University. Back in 1993, Anders conducted a study of talented young violinists who all had different ways of studying and practising. He wanted to know if there was a 'best practice' system that he could then teach to others. His research identified a strong trend that pointed to the most improved performers practising in three separate 90-minute morning sessions, with a break between each one. On the back of this discovery he went on to carry out more research with other musicians, writers and athletes, which revealed similar results.

When the United States' Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) carried out their National Reading Panel Report, they concluded that students should be required to have a 90-minute uninterrupted reading block each day for them to gain sufficient reading development. Many schools in England have reached similar conclusions and now run lessons and study periods for 90 minutes at a time to increase their students' capacity to learn.

90 minutes is the maximum time for the best of your ability

Professors researching ways to beat cancer using our bodies' natural strength observed that high intensity mental or physical activity for more than 90 minutes often caused people to move into 'fight or flight' mode. This means that the body is effectively panicking and flooding itself with adrenaline to try to cope with operating outside of its normal scope of activity. Once again, science suggests that 90 minutes is the optimum cycle. In other words, 90 minutes is the maximum time that you should spend doing *any* activity if you want to maintain performance to the best of your ability.

Think about your own habits and activities for a moment. Perhaps you have noticed that there are certain periods of the day for you when your brain

works best – so why not start using those times to take on your most important tasks? Do you find that in the right environment, with a clear and well-defined goal and just the right amount of pressure (preferably not too much), that you can achieve phenomenal results? Maybe you are a power-napper? If so, do power-naps have to be of a certain length to revive you or do they sometimes just make you feel worse?

Why not turn your knowledge and experience of this naturally occurring miracle within the design of your body into a powerful weapon of super-success?

Follow the science and reap the rewards

All of the scientific evidence we've reviewed thus far points to the fact that we work best in 90-minute chunks; that concentration diminishes every 90 minutes; and that our rest periods are far more effective in five 90-minute periods per night, or one during the day.

As a naturally occurring phenomenon, seemingly designed within our bodies and psyche, it is one that we should likely embrace rather than fight. And as with all machinery, processes or computer programming, we can enhance efficiency and longevity when we follow the rules as they were designed to work.

The science that we have uncovered for you here merely scratches the surface of the work of many brilliant biologists, psychologists and physiologists all over the world. And Nigel's 10-year experiment of utilizing 90-minute chunks once per day to build what have become nine separate million-pound businesses is just another example that demonstrates the factual evidence of the theory. In short, everything he has created in his many super-successful businesses has been built in those 90-minute chunks – and there is no doubt this success would have been much diminished without them.

We hope this bit of scientific background represents compelling food for thought and convinces you that there is a great opportunity to continue the experiment for yourself. Finding those 90-minute chunks four or five days a week can catapult your business forward, providing you spend them in the right environment and working in the right things – both of which we cover later in the book.



THE £11,000 POSTCARD

The title of this story is the reason why it was one of the first stories we chose to include in this book, but the real value is in its detail. The lessons it imparts are simple but critical: put in a little effort, take on minimal cost or risk, add some help from those you trust – and repeat.

One of the things that Mike Corbridge's company Social Media Black Belt, based in Milton Keynes, does is to create mobile apps. After having identified that sales of these products were a bit slow, Mike initially resorted to the normal 'average' business-owner strategy of 'hoping' that things would improve.

Of course, they didn't (as that approach rarely works).

Mike then thought – well, why not try that 90 minutes idea that Nigel is always talking about? Surely it can't do any harm. So he set aside several 90-minute chunks of time to focus on developing the mobile apps side of his business. During one

of these, he came up with the idea of sending a direct-mail postcard campaign to a list of solicitors. He figured that they had shown interest in apps in the past and always paid on time – two important factors in any marketing venture worth your time – so they'd be ideal for his targeting.

Another four 90-minute sessions later – coupled with some input from some trusted eyes and ears – and Mike had carefully created a list of 31 'ideal' prospects *and* designed a postcard. It cost him just £23.77 to print and send his postcards, which he followed up with a few emails – all crafted within a single 90-minute chunk on a Wednesday morning. The results were quite stunning.

I just had to put my prices up . . .

He sold a number of apps as a direct result of the campaign, which allowed him to increase his prices several times. Those sales alone would have seen a massive return on his investment. But one sale in particular led to a second order, a referral to another business and a massive social media and ad words contract. At the time of writing, Mike's 31-postcard experiment has earned him over £11,000 in new business for his £23.77 monetary investment and 90 minutes of uninterrupted focus – and it's growing every day.

Consider the figures he achieved:

Financial investment = 40,148% return on investment
Value of his time = £1,466 per hour



FROM CAPACITY TO ELASTICITY IN 90 MINUTES

This story answers the classic question facing the one-person business owner who really wants to grow, but is held back because they are the expert, the skill-holder, the admin/accounts resource and the sole doer. Consequently, their question is often, 'How do I grow when I am already taking on more work than I can handle by myself?'

Answers in 90 minutes

This was the quandary facing Sue Westwood-Ruttledge, a brilliant photographer from Manchester who specializes in horse portraits. She was already a disciple of Nigel's teachings and using 90-minute chunks to grow her business – hence the reason she had reached the 'too busy' stage. So Sue decided she would apply her next few 90-minute chunks to working out a growth strategy that didn't require her to put in more hours than she had available.

The answer came from another business book she was reading at the time, which posed the question, 'How can you teach other people to do what you do?' After doing some thinking, the word 'franchise' materialized in her mind. So in August 2013, after a week of 90-minute chunks dedicated to releasing an idea from the stable within her mind into a thoroughbred plan of action, Sue had created a step-by-step plan to turn her business into a franchise.

The thing that holds most people back

Aware that most people are world-class at getting ready and determined to be better than that, Sue launched Horse Photographer UK in January of 2014 and within five months, had signed up her sixth franchisee. She had identified the answer to a barrier that holds so many business owners back from becoming true entrepreneurs – thinking like a one-man-band – and smashed this obstacle to pieces in just five focused 90-minute chunks over the course of a single week.

Sue has gone on to launch Dog Photographer UK and continues to build and develop each and every aspect of her business in 90-minute chunks.



TEACHER GETS GRADE A++ BY ACHIEVING 200% IN HER 90-MINUTE EXAM

As a teacher running an education centre in South Wales, Cerys Bevan knows all about the value of testing a theory to see if it works. So after hearing about the 90-minute chunks idea for the first time, she was intrigued enough to see what all the fuss was about. The results were stunning.



90 minutes to respond

Did you know that the average person responds to a text message in around 90 seconds, whereas if you want to get a response from an email it takes (you guessed it) closer to 90 minutes? It seems that a psychological link has developed in our brains that makes picking up the phone to converse in text more urgent than the now 'old technology' of email.

Business lesson

This should tell you something really important when it comes to both your own time and how other people use theirs. Whilst text is clearly a way of interrupting someone's thought pattern and getting their attention, perhaps it is worth considering that email is a more powerful tool for addressing strategic, considered and timely issues such as promoting your business. The logical response then would be to put the appropriate amount of time into preparing what you send by email – 90 minutes ought to do it. (Note: By the time this book goes to print some new technology may well have taken over from text as the 'urgency button' – and by the time of the second edition you may well be saying 'what's email?')

Doubled turnover, doubled client base, doubled the premises

This positive outcome started with a single 90-minute 'working on her business' trial, which resulted in Cerys' phone ringing and someone wanting to book a tutoring session. The following day a similar pattern ensued – and she soon realized that by focusing on building her business for just a short time each day, she could make her phone ring at will. She quickly became hooked. As Cerys now says, 'Spending focused time on my business is not a chore. It's highly addictive and completely energizing! Every action has a reaction and my 90-minute chunks certainly epitomize this rule.'

As any teacher will tell you, the more you practice, the better you become; and the more you do something, the easier it gets. This has certainly been the case for Cerys' blossoming educational business. And as she has become more efficient and focused in what she does during these valuable chunks of time, the results have grown exponentially.

One of Cerys' favourite 90-minute activities is to contact five existing customers with a 'good news' text, value email or just a 'thank you' (this simple task alone increases her referrals and her retention rate considerably).



YOU'VE GOT 90 MINUTES OR YOU DIE

Made famous to a new generation by its dramatic retelling in the 1995 film, the story of Apollo 13 was one of life or death decisions and actions under enormous pressure. As part of the US Apollo Space Program the flight left the Kennedy Space Center, Florida, on 11th April 1970 and was supposed to be the third of its manned crafts to actually land on the surface of the moon.

But what started out as simply another medium-sized step towards NASA's lunar ambitions, and an event that was barely noticed by the general public at the time, soon grabbed the headlines for all the wrong reasons.

Houston we have a problem

Two days into the flight and 200,000 miles from earth, an oxygen tank exploded causing massive damage to the craft and forcing the crew to abort the mission. Apollo 13 actually consisted of two

separate spacecraft that were joined together by a connecting tunnel. The Command Module needed to be shut down as a result of the explosion, and the three astronauts on board – Jim Lovell, Fred Haise and Jack Swigert – took residence in the Lunar Module as their only hope of survival. This moment was immortalized by the famously misquoted message, 'Houston we have a problem.'

After teams on the ground closely examined all of the circumstances, they decided that the most efficient route back to safety would be to utilize the moon's gravity as a slingshot to throw the craft back towards the earth. (Though this was probably a lot more technical than the way we can describe it, that is more or less what happened.)

Although the plan was a sound one on paper, a number of unforeseen, potentially life-threatening issues arose during what became a rescue mission that an entire nation watched on the edge of their seats. One of the most amazing of these involved the very air the crew were breathing. And the way they overcame the issue has some remarkably poignant lessons for business owners that let 'other stuff' get in the way of the important things.

And on this occasion, they only had 90 minutes to create a solution that would save their lives.

One of the ground staff noted a fundamental problem that everyone – even the men on the spacecraft – had somehow overlooked: the Lunar Module could provide a sufficient supply of oxygen for the journey, but just like all the human beings back on earth, the crew breathed out carbon dioxide. And the CO_2 filters were designed to cope with two men for a day and a half, not three men for four days. It's amazing how often it takes someone outside of the firing line, perhaps a mentor or even one of your customers, to point out the blindingly obvious.

There were, of course, extra carbon dioxide filters back on the Command Module; but whether through lack of foresight, outside influence or pure stupidity, someone had decided in a back office somewhere to make those a different shape. So the crew had to quite literally find a way to fit a square peg into a round hole. Now, it would be easy to make light of this predicament and perhaps even smile at the irony, but that wasn't the case during the tense hours when three men's lives depended on making this work. They only had 90 minutes to complete their task – or they died.

This was a serious dilemma

The business lesson here is such a powerful one. Consider the situation they faced: three men acting

as part of a much larger project (the Apollo Space Program); totally immersed in their role within the bigger picture (the third moon landing); and finding themselves deep in a situation where every minute, decision and action was critical. And yet, something came up that needed their full concentration and attention for 90 minutes where their success pretty much depended on focus and not being distracted by the outside world.

The typical, time-critical, curve-ball that pops up in every business from time to time

When the carbon dioxide issue had finally been spotted and the square-filter, round-hole issue identified, the team back at Ground Control got to work on sorting out the solution. They effectively collected together all of the bits and pieces that were available on the spacecraft and laid them out on a table, then tried to come up with a method of fudging the fit.

The way the scene is depicted in the movie is one of our favourites. A bunch of techies walk in with boxes full of gear and say, 'we've got to find a way to make this (holds up square filter) fit into this (holds up round hole) using nothing but that'. It

was the typical, time-critical, curve-ball that pops up in every business operation from time to time; of course, the stakes were just a little higher. But they designed and created the prototype in time, complete with gaffer tape and the cardboard cover of an instruction manual.

Here's where our space-epic, business-building analogy gets really interesting – and where the most important lesson comes into its own. There was a gauge in the control panel of the Lunar Module that measured the level of carbon dioxide in the air. With three exhaling men in the craft and the existing filters having expired, the carbon dioxide reading was nearly at 8 by the time the solution was communicated to the crew. It had been rising at a rate of just under 4 per hour and 15 was the critical mark, the point at which they would run out of breathable air.

Create urgency and deadlines in a controlled environment

This meant they had just 90 minutes to get the solution built before carbon dioxide poisoning took hold of them. The effects of this would include blurred vision, brain asphyxia, reduced concentration and coordination and ultimately total blackout. But all

of these symptoms would slowly take hold of them as they approached the 15 mark.

What followed was a feat of remarkable focus and deliberate action, under enormous pressure, by the three men as they set aside 90 minutes out of what was already a fairly busy day (understatement of this book) to focus on saving their own lives. They did, of course, complete the task and, if you want to experience the drama of the moment, the film portrays it wonderfully.

The real lesson here for entrepreneurs and business owners is that we can create urgency and deadlines in our own businesses in a controlled environment to improve our lives – under much less dire circumstances, of course. You can be like the guys in Ground Control, standing around a table with an urgent problem to solve – rather than the ones cooped up in a tiny spacecraft with restricted air supply and reducing clarity of mind. You can go and find a place where you can think clearly, plan your escape from a grim situation or plot out the next step in your pathway to super-success. You don't need to launch off on a dangerous mission into outer space, but it can be an exciting one; and you don't need to cut off your access to vital substances (feel free to take an air supply or a cup of tea with you). But you do need to take it seriously.

A dose of regular, diligent focus solves it all

The next time you decide not to put aside time to focus on investing in your future, because you are too busy doing something else, ask yourself this question: 'If I had to do this today or else I die … could I do it?' The answer to that question is invariably 'yes'.

So the next question you could ask yourself is: 'What is more important to me, my life and the lives of those I love: achieving my ultimate goals, or dealing with today's distractions?'

If you find the right answer to that question you will get home safely and there will be no problem to report to Houston, in your business or in your life.



DOING 90 MINUTES EVERY SINGLE DAY IS THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE THE NUMBERS ADD UP

When it comes to judging the real power of any activity or process in your business you have to look at the cold hard facts – and those are usually the numbers. And if you want to understand what the numbers *really* mean, then you are best off asking an accountant. So when Cheshire-based chartered accountant James Sheard from The Accountancy People tells you that putting aside 90 minutes a day to work on your business five days a week, 48 weeks a year equals two full months of working on your business, you should take note.

James goes on to point out that those two months are not just you building your business. They are

two months of you at your absolute, mind-blowingly brilliant, uninterrupted, laser-focused best.

And like everything else that James does in his business, this is not just theory. He is making things happen by dedicating 90 minutes a day to reaching his goals.



The 90-minute deep breath

Did you know that sperm whales have been known to dive deeper than 1,000 meters whilst searching for their favourite foods, which include squid, octopus and cuttle-fish? This means that they can hold their breath for at least 90 minutes, the longest of any animal on the planet. It is also the animal with the largest brain of any that has ever lived on earth, although this is not necessarily directly linked to its intelligence.

Business lesson

If you want to grow big and strong and truly reach the potential within your business then you need to go where the food is. Someone once said that 'The toughest part of getting to the top of the ladder is getting through the crowd at the bottom' and that analogy works underwater too. In your business you can choose to chase around for scraps with the minnows on the surface, or you can devise a plan, fix your sights on it (you need a big heart not a big brain) and hold your breath. Don't fear the depths though; as long as you have worked out your numbers, made smart business decisions and you are determined to succeed then you will break through the surface 90 minutes later as the king of the ocean.

A healthy new income stream in just 90 minutes per day

James recently created a completely new product to help other accountants start their own practices, which has become a healthy new income stream for his business. And he achieved this over a nine-month period, simply by the discipline of writing 1,000 words every day in a set-aside 90-minute chunk. The key word here being discipline.

James will attest to the fact that, 'It's not easy doing 90 minutes a day and I wriggled like hell to start with.' But he persisted and now, if he ever feels like missing a day, he simply reminds himself of the bigger picture: two solid months of entrepreneur-extraordinaire James, working at his very best levels of effort and concentration, hurtling him towards super-success.

Here are some of the other key learning points that James discovered:

- Spending a whole day on building your business DOES NOT WORK! You simply can't work at maximum efficiency for a whole day; your productivity inevitably declines.
- Trying to do *more* than 90 minutes is also too much. You get behind in your day job because you get too busy.

- You have to get other people to take on the inefficient jobs to keep your day job and the most valuable time of your day – your 90 minutes – from suffering.



IT'S NOT A BOOKKEEPING ERROR; IT'S £1,200 PROFIT PER MONTH AT ZERO COST!

Tracy Irwin of TI Payroll & Accounting spends all of her time looking after other people's numbers. She started her business working from home and within four years had expanded to her own offices and several employees. She attributes this success to hard work and applying the marketing and business building support she has learned in the Entrepreneur's Circle – including engaging in practices such as dedicating 90 minutes per day to getting and keeping customers. Despite her success, one thing she had been a tiny bit afraid of and so avoided throughout her four years in business was increasing her prices.

But it turned out that all she needed was 90 minutes and a few deep breaths of bravery.

So, during one of her regular 90-minute chunks, Tracy steadied her nerves, braced herself against the preconceived surge of negative emotion, looked fear of upsetting her clients straight in the eye – and wrote a price increase letter. She took the full 90 minutes to make sure it was perfect, she was skilful and sensitive in her delivery – and she eased the pain a little by giving them two months' notice.

The result of this bold but totally reasonable and appropriate act was not the huge rush of cancelled contracts that she had feared. Instead, it was a bottom line increase of £1,200 per month. This is income that she could then invest in improving her already brilliant service to her valued clients – which meant that *everyone* benefited from her dedication.

PART TWO

Day-dreaming, Days of Destiny and Dynamic Doing . . .



I HAVE A DREAM TODAY

There is almost nothing more powerful, more moving, and that can wield more world-changing potential, than the spoken word when backed by absolute passion and belief. World wars, fights for freedom, revolutions and invasions have been fought with weapons and human sacrifice since the beginning of history and beyond – but it is usually words that stop them.

Prejudice, misunderstanding, bad upbringing, twisted morals and evil ideals fuel anger and conflict – but well-chosen, love-driven words can still move hearts to believe that there may be hope. In the end, people rarely settle their differences completely, and perhaps there is a limit to the power of reason and rhetoric. But one thing is certain about the influence of words – sometimes they do indeed change our world.

The humble 90-minute birth of the speech that moved a nation . . .

Of all the greatest, most passionate, influential and memorable speeches in history, perhaps the best

known and most quoted oratory influencer was Dr Martin Luther King Jr's 'I have a dream' speech. Delivered during a Washington DC civil rights march in August 1963, it was 17 minutes that made a genuine difference at the time and continues to resonate with the world half a century later. King's life and all that he achieved was heroic; the delivery of the speech itself was legendary; and the effect that it had in the lives of so many people across ages and nations was – and still is – electrifying.

Yet the preparation was remarkably ordinary and simply a product of routine.

It is amazing how often an everyday activity – diligently yet habitually completed – can sometimes have the power to change the course of your entire life, simply because you turned up. What follows is the back story to King's speech on that amazing day, complete with its humble 90-minute beginnings.

If tried and tested works – reuse it . . .

For at least three years prior, King had been voicing the idea and evoking the imagery of 'having a dream' during his many campaigning performances. This thought had clearly struck a chord with people, so it was no wonder that he built upon and reused the notion many times over. Put simply, it worked!

The Washington speech was originally going to be called 'Normalcy, Never Again' and indeed went through a number of different guises and versions in the build-up to the event. But as was his custom, King didn't actually finalize his notes until the night before – and, as always, by taking time out on his own to pray and think. Several of his aides and advisors had even suggested to King on this occasion that he shouldn't even use the dream theme again.

So on the evening of 27th August 1963, together with a team of trusted friends, King sat down to discuss the speech. They talked about using various phrases and samples of his tried and tested messages of preceding years. King wanted to include passages from the Bible and lines from the 'then' US national anthem, all heavily weighted towards recognition of the 100th-year anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's great Emancipation Proclamation. The notes themselves ended up with no mention at all of having a dream.

90 minutes alone to fine-tune the counsel of others

After much debate that took place into the early hours of the following morning – and armed with advice, proven material that he knew would work, a deadline, belief and passion for a just cause – King

went to finish his speech alone. As was his custom he took 90 minutes to perfect the final script and finished around 4am.

It seems trivial to pick out a lesson for the keen entrepreneur from the events described here, but there are valuable things to learn when viewed in an appropriately proportionate scale. Namely, as the leader in your business, the one with the real passion for your cause and the responsibility to direct it, you should always look for and take advice from those you trust. But ultimately, you have to decide what you do – and take ownership of the message you deliver to your customers and those that would take guidance from you.

And if you do decide to take counsel, you must go and spend time in your own space (locked away for 90 minutes is proven to be the best method) deciding what you believe in and the best way to share your message.

Diligent planning lets you adapt to the moment successfully

As mentioned before, this process would have been quite ordinary for Martin Luther King, given that it was his regular method. He had even been asked by the authorities – who supported his cause – to tone

down his message on this occasion. Of course, he had absolutely no idea at that time just how earth-shattering this particular speech would turn out to be. There was nothing new in what he delivered that day, and by the end of it, he had actually wandered from his prepared script and been drawn into his eloquent and poetic 'dream' refrain once more.

This was simply because he was alert and he knew his audience. But without his past experience, his planning, preparation, the diligent 90-minute effort in the early hours and the advice of his friends he would not have had a platform to do that from.

Ultimately, Dr King did make a huge impact that day, which has changed the world. The speech still stirs an emotion today whenever people hear it. He delivered his famous words in around 17 minutes and composed the final draft in 90; but the facts are that his commitment, his passion and his will to fight were there for a lifetime before that day.

What could you craft today in 90 minutes that might just represent the most important change of your life – perhaps even create a legacy to leave for those you love the most? The answer, of course, is 'nothing' if you don't make those 90-minute chunks happen.



TAKE 90 MINUTES TO TELL THE WORLD JUST HOW GREAT YOU ARE!

One of the very best – and sometimes, very worst – feelings as a diligent business owner is looking back at something you did right and thinking, 'That was so easy and so effective – why on earth didn't I do it sooner?' That thought must have crossed Sucheet Amins' mind when he saw the results of one of his regular 90-minute business-building sessions.

As the old Chinese proverb goes, 'The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.'



90 minutes on the field of play

Did you know that whilst the English Football Association was founded in 1863 with its 14 original 'Rules of The Game', it was not until 1877 that the length of a match was finally set at 90 minutes? Prior to that the two team captains would simply get together before the game and agree how long they wanted to play for. Eventually 90 minutes was deemed to be the most appropriate length of time because it catered for the fitness levels of most players and the concentration/interest levels of those watching.

Business lesson

When you arrange a business meeting with someone, you would, as a matter of course, have a clear start time firmly set in your diary. It would obviously cause massive confusion and wasted time if you didn't. But how often do you set a clear finish time? You see there is an assumption for most business meetings that they will last an hour and that means they can easily run into 90 or 120 minutes – of which a large chunk is idle chatting. This usually ends with one person saying 'well you must have a lot to be getting on with…' and making their excuses. So, if you value your time, why not start setting a definitive end time for each meeting you arrange – 45 minutes is usually a good start because it tells the person you are meeting with that you also have other things to do.

Sending something is better than sending nothing

This is not a story of massive turnover or a business-changing decision, but simply one that demonstrates that 'sending something is better than sending nothing'. Sucheet's Manchester-based legal practice relies heavily on customer feedback and recommendations, both for its search engine optimization and to demonstrate its standing at the top end of the profession.

So after discovering that his most recent Google review was over a year old, Sucheet set aside 90 minutes to craft a short email campaign to a handful of his recent customers. Consumers love this; Google can't resist it; and smart business owners can do it in the space of an hour and a half.

A bright idea, 90 minutes' worth of work, three emails and one week later, Aequitas Legal had five more Google reviews than it had previously registered – putting it another five Google-attracting reviews further ahead of any of its competitors. This single act means that the company is guaranteed to rank higher on Google than its competitors for the immediate and foreseeable future. And what's more, when potential clients see the link to his website at the top of the rankings they will now

see it surrounded by up-to-date, five-star reviews from delighted customers.

What could you spend 90 minutes doing today to get your customers to take notice of you?

You never know it might even lead to direct uplifts in turnover or significant business changes, but there's only one way to find out.



A SPECTACLE TO BEHOLD . . . AS MEDIA EXPERT BRINGS HIS BIG IDEAS INTO FOCUS

Aarif Merali owns and runs a forward-thinking media business. Though it currently operates under the guise of a printer, it is ready for whatever the future holds. Even the name of his business, d2rCrossMedia, was designed to cater for whatever changing currents the world of business media might bring.

As a true ideas man and an entrepreneur with one eye always on the future, Aarif often struggled to focus on what he needed to do today to get him there. So the discovery of the 90-minute formula was a real revelation to him and a great way to help him map out his plan for the future. His 90-minute sessions have allowed him to identify a number of exciting projects that had lain dormant on bits of paper or in the back of his mind for too long, but which he has now seen come to fruition.

Small steps that lead to big successes . . .

One of these was a marketing system for independent opticians fighting the false economy of the high-street brands. Aarif has now launched this idea for a number of clients with great success and lots of future potential. And he was able to design, build and market a new business income exclusively during a programme of 90-minute chunks.

Aarif has a very clear vision about his business planning and how to shrink what appear to be massive, unassailable projects into the crystal-clear focus of several smaller steps. He rarely lets a day go by without putting aside this time to work on giving shape to his ideas and says, 'Doing my 90 minutes is like going to the gym. You think of all sorts of other things to do instead but once you get going and finish, you are so glad you did it – just like a good work out. And my business is much, much fitter as a result.'



FROM LAZY PILATES AND GOLDEN TIME TO RADIO 2 FAME

Already an expert in the power of relaxation and meditation, Hertfordshire-based Pilates instructor and lifestyle guru Bev Densham was astounded at the effectiveness of using 90 minutes a day to focus on building her own business. These short periods – which she now refers to as her 'golden time' – have enabled Bev to achieve some remarkable results and amplified her reputation within her profession.

Within just eight weeks of learning the 90-minute secret she managed to plan, write and publish her first book, *Relax and Do Your ABC*. She has also used 90-minute chunks to write her 17 Minutes Lazy Pilates Workout product.



The 90-minute movie of a forgotten era

Did you know that in the early days of cinema from the 1910s right through to the 1950s the majority of films being made were around 90 minutes long? It was seen as the optimum concentration and engagement level for the viewer, and it is only in more recent times that the two- or three-hour epic has become the norm. The American producer, director and actor Roger Corman once said 'no film should be longer than 90 minutes without special Papal dispensation'. I tend to agree.

Business lesson

This one is very much a matter of opinion (possibly age), but do you ever find yourself watching a really exciting, engaging, adrenaline-pumping movie that has you checking your watch by the end of it? Have you ever felt that a great film, which got everything right (script, cast, visual effects), was spoilt because it was just a bit too long? It might be just me (I did say it was a matter of opinion) but maybe, on this occasion, the old school approach was right. We do live in a rapidly changing world, where information technology is influencing our lives at a pace that is often hard to keep up with, but we should never ignore those hard, fast truths that underpin everything we stand for. Why not take out 90 minutes today to remember why you got into business in the first place?

The real secret is in doing 90 minutes every single day . . .

As with the exercises that Bev teaches her customers, the real power of putting aside 90-minute chunks of time to build your business is in doing it regularly. She has found, as so many others have, that tiny steps lead to big successes. Bev explains that 'the 90-minute chunks continue to create more products and passive income streams, including a postcard and greetings card range. 90 minutes is simply genius'.

The last bit of Bev's story to date is that Radio 2 presenter and author of five books herself Janey Lee Grace has now featured her success story in her new book *You Are the Brand* – as have we in this book.



90 MINUTES THAT CHANGED THE SAUCE YOU CHOOSE

Do you ever wonder how things got to be the way they are or why people very quickly get set in their opinion, often almost fixated on an idea or a belief that is either untrue or not necessarily the only possibility. If they would take some time out to think for themselves or consider another point of view, they'd likely be able to release a significant amount of creativity. The same thing happens in business – and in many cases to the detriment of the person or people involved.

Do you want things the way they *are* – or the way they *could be*?

How often have you made a really great suggestion to someone just to hear the reply, 'That wouldn't work in our group/company/industry'? Have you ever had an idea that seemed so obvious that you thought, 'If that could really work then someone

else would have done it by now' so you didn't pursue it. Then five years later you see that someone has just started making a lot of money from it.

Most people remain so focused on the present – on the way things are now – that they rarely stop to think about how they *could be*. The following story highlights what happened during one 90-minute block that changed the choices you and I have about what we eat.

90 minutes release ideas that bubble under the surface of your mind . . .

In the early 1970s, well-known beverage brand Pepsi asked renowned American market researcher and psychophysicist Howard Moskowitz to help them create the perfect sugar-free soda using newly-discovered sugar alternative, aspartame. They wanted to develop a diet version of their popular drink – and were looking to get it absolutely perfect. Howard's market research and exhaustive taste tests rewarded him with a bunch of random data that showed no clear pattern to determine what taste people preferred.

Where most might have just made a 'guesstimate' based on the average high spot in the data, Howard knew that the true answer just needed a different

question. And that required a period of serious, laser-focused thought.

Howard often set 90-minute time slots aside for thinking and searching out solutions to tough problems. During one of those sessions over the days and weeks that followed, Howard's mind began to turn. He realized that the perfect Pepsi didn't exist; therefore it was pointless to look for it. The true question should be: 'What do the perfect Pepsis (plural) taste like?'

Pepsi didn't really know what he meant – and neither did a number of other food companies in different industries that approached him for similar help.

Variation is the spice of life . . .

But Howard knew that there was magic in that 90-minute brain opener. And so when Campbell's Soup asked him to help build their Prego spaghetti sauce brand, he suggested his multiple-choice theory to them. And the rest (although you are probably not even aware of it) is the history that enables you and me to choose from so many different varieties of our favourite foods today.

In short, he persuaded Campbell's to create 45 different varieties of Prego spaghetti sauce: some sweeter, others more tart; some very mild and others

spiced up; some with garlic added in different quantities and an assortment of herbs shared amongst the rest. They even experimented with texture and viscosity from extra smooth to very lumpy (technical terms!).

Thousands of taste trials later, the testers had sampled and scored all 45 variants – giving Howard enough data to formulate his findings. He was not looking for a favourite; everyone else could do that. Instead, he began looking for groups. And this is what he found.

Approximately 30% of the population liked plain types of spaghetti sauce; 35% preferred spicy versions; and 35% had a real passion for extra chunky sauce. So what's the big deal, you're wondering – and the point of the story?

Imagine – create – test – amend – supply . . .

Until the early 1980s, when one of Howard's 90-minute chunks discovered that people had a burning passion for extra chunky spaghetti sauce – no one made it for them. Most companies hadn't discovered this gap in the market because everyone was asking the wrong question – they were still looking for a single 'perfect' product and not the variety that people actually wanted.

Every one of those 45 different recipes was someone's favourite – and over the next 10 years Prego's extra chunky variation made Campbell's $600 million.

Soon, other food companies realized that their customers all have different tastes and preferences, and they started expanding their selection of available products. They saw for the first time that one size rarely fits all.

So, next time you go into the supermarket just take a look at the wide variety of options available in soups, cereals, washing powder, even fruit and vegetables, and remember that the choices you are able to make today only came about because a very smart man called Howard Moskowitz dedicated his 90-minute chunks back in the 1970s to finding the right question.



STOP HORSING AROUND AND JUST DO IT – A 235% UPLIFT SHOULD MAKE YOU THIRSTY

Laura McDouall runs Hoss Equine, a quirky horse supplies business in Cardiff. From the first time she heard the 90-minutes-a-day philosophy and started applying it, massive change followed. In fact, in the first quarter that she started to set aside a small chunk of focused time each day to grow her business, she saw a huge 235% increase over the previous year.

Laura recalled, 'Before this, I spent my time just surviving, getting the day-to-day stuff done. I was very busy and very stressed.' She goes on to say, 'The impact of "90 minutes" has been incredible! I focus on how to get more customers, how to increase the average spend and how to get our regular spenders back more often.'



English is evolving in 90-minute chunks

Did you know that a new word is added to the English language every 90 minutes, with the current wordometer total reaching in excess of one million words? (I might even have invented a new one in the last sentence!) Of course, no one knows them all and most of us do not get anywhere near that sort of vocabulary, but you would probably be surprised at just how many you do know. The data show that the average person knows between 35,000 and 50,000 words, whilst the better-educated ones could boast around 75,000.

Business lesson

The world we live in is always changing with new ideas at every turn, and as a business owner it is important to realize there is no status quo. You are either growing or shrinking. No one could possibly know every single word in the English language, so keeping track of the 16 new words that are invented each day would be futile. But let's say you were a website developer and a new idea like Web 2.0 emerged (which, in June 2009, became the millionth word added to the English language) then you should be aware of it. Likewise in your industry, it is vital that you are aware of the landmarks, changes and future potentials that are specific to what you are trying to achieve. You don't need to know everything, but you should know the really important things that can influence your success. Perhaps you could put aside 90 minutes every few weeks to investigate those changes.

It has to be 'daily' 90-minute chunks . . .

Putting aside the time has been an absolute revelation for Laura; but the already impressive difference was amplified even more when she made a commitment to regularly focus her effort on *daily* 90-minute chunks. The smart things she does during that time include:

- Gathering and studying her business numbers.
- Delivering valuable content to her list (4–6 times each month) via email and direct mail.
- Creating and implementing a brand new loyalty scheme.
- Completely restructuring the website to boost online sales.
- Increasing her prices by an average of 5–10%.
- Introduced a new three-tier pricing and product structure.

Laura is also writing a book (in 90-minute chunks, of course) that she is planning to use as a marketing piece for her business. And, she's about to launch a *second* business. It seems perhaps over simplistic to suggest that all of this massive success has come about purely through her work in 90-minute chunks, but the reality demonstrates the truth of it

and perhaps the same could be true for you if you acted on it.

But as the old adage suggests, 'you can lead horses to water, but only the really thirsty ones will drink'.

It all depends on how much you want this sort of success in your business.



PRODUCTIVITY, CREATIVITY AND PROFITABILITY . . . IN 90 MINUTES

The fundamental lesson in this book – the message we want you to take away and use in your own life and business – is that most people get too busy completing daily tasks and busy work to actually grow or change anything. And yes, those responsibilities are necessary – but they cannot be everything.

Though it might initially seem like a big ask to take 90 minutes out of every day, it can make a genuinely transformational impact when you do it regularly.

In fact, that's what helped Adam Butler of Easy Online Recruitment to achieve a 5,000% return on investment from one sales letter. Like many others, he also uses the same 'focused time' principle to complete projects such as writing books or designing new products.

Adam identified that some of his customers were looking for a basic recruitment solution and others needed a more involved employee selection and interview process. He had unearthed the need to make available a premium version of his service. So he set about creating a product that would offer a variety of additional benefits at a very low delivery cost to him – but that he could sell for a higher price. He achieved this by setting aside 90-minute chunks of time each day. He then spent a further chunk of clear-thinking and customer-minded time (perhaps the most important one in this particular sequence) on writing a sales letter to his existing clients. This letter resulted in the massive 5,000% return on investment and an ongoing 'game-changer' for his whole business.

Following another key principle that he'd learned from the Entrepreneur's Circle, Adam also set aside three of his 90-minute chunks each week between October 2013 and January 2014 to write his book *Hiring a Superstar – The Ultimate Talent Finding Toolkit*, which is helping employers find great staff all over the UK.



WE HAVE TWO CHOICES TODAY – SURRENDER OR WIN

One of the most critical moments in deciding the outcome of the American War of Independence hung in the balance of a 90-minute battle early one December morning in 1776. Recorded as one of the shortest battles in the entire conflict, this fight to the death was so much more than an 'all or nothing' venture; it was history in the making.

Having just come off the back of a string of defeats, General George Washington was in danger of earning himself a reputation as a failure. And the odds stacked against him for this crucial battle in his people's overall fight for freedom were not exactly promising a chance to change his fortunes. The obstacle that stood in his way this time were three regiments of Hessian soldiers, the most professional fighting men in Europe at the time. Fifteen hundred of these elite troops were safely garrisoned in

the town of Trenton, New Jersey, and showed no signs of weakness.

With a group of civilian soldiers in his army, General Washington's ambitious plan depended on complete surprise, perfect timing and the swiftest, most well-executed attack of the war to date. But that couldn't happen until the battle itself took place – and there was much more to overcome before his men got to do any fighting. This included crossing a river; torrential rain, sleet and snow; making a nine mile pre-dawn march in freezing conditions; low morale brought on by tiredness and previous defeats; and the objections of several senior soldiers in the American ranks.

A clear target and a deadline

On the night before the battle – 25th December 1776 – there was one 90-minute chunk that would eventually decide its outcome the following morning. Washington had laid his plans on the line and then stated the position that his rag-tag army of simple family men faced, saying something to the effect of, 'Gentlemen, we have two choices today; we surrender or we win.' He then went on to point out the finality and absolutely critical nature of the choice, '… However, we cannot surrender; therefore we MUST win.'

In a modern-day, focused entrepreneur's world this is what we would call a *clear target with a deadline*. And like Washington, the bold, ambitious and ultimately successful entrepreneur with this sort of winning mentality will always come up against opposition from people who know better, or perhaps who know – and operate according to – fear.

And it's crucial to keep in mind that not all old heads are wise heads; that is, the people with the most experience don't always have the best solutions. Two of the seasoned, professional soldiers that were with Washington at that final briefing spoke to him directly with concerns about the plan and his 'all or nothing' attitude to it.

First, General Glover made it known that he disagreed with what Washington wanted to do and strongly advised against fighting. But after having made his point he got behind his commander-in-chief and played his part in the battle that followed. General Gates, another very experienced man, was even more vocally opposed and accused Washington of being reckless and foolish. He told him that he was 'leading a group of frightened boys – not an army'.

Washington replied, 'But they are boys who will follow.'

Gates never fought in the battle. It's believed that he feigned illness, and later in his career was given the nickname 'Granny Gates' after showing more lack of heart and willingness to take action.

90 minutes that changed the course of a war

Having laid down a daring but carefully thought-through and workable plan – and then inspiring belief amongst his men – General George Washington set off to make history. They crossed the Delaware River nine miles north of Trenton in the early hours of the morning, despite atrocious weather conditions. They marched to the town on tired, weary, frightened legs, but fuelled by big hearts and trust in their leader and his plan. And they engaged in a battle that they should never have won.

They learned later that it was the terrible conditions that night which had persuaded the Hessians that the Americans couldn't possibly attempt an attack – and which made the element of surprise so successful.

At 8am on the morning of 26th December, Washington's makeshift army overpowered the first outpost half a mile outside of Trenton. They were already hours behind schedule by this time,

having planned to get there before dawn; but they were committed to the victory. They arrived at the town at 8:30am and took the surprised Hessian warriors by storm. The swift, clinical, daring, heroic and absolutely brilliant manoeuvre executed by Washington that morning was astonishing.

By 10am, the fighting was all over; just 90 minutes after it had begun.

They'd captured all of the enemy's weapons and taken 900 Hessian soldiers captive, and had done so reporting casualties numbering just two or three men. Washington's patriot army had freed Trenton and was back over the river by noon. In doing so they had beaten three regiments of the finest, best-trained soldiers in Europe by pure tactics, wit and outrageous bravery in a 90-minute battle that would change the course of the entire war.

Although he never admitted it, I suspect that not even Washington himself fully believed that they could win; he just knew that they *had to*. From there, Washington went on to win the Battle of Princeton, another key victory in the fight for independence, shortly afterwards.

The Battle of Trenton offers six significant lessons for business owners:

- Widely-accepted beliefs and methods are not necessarily the best ones.
- Those with the most experience don't always have the best solutions.
- Doing the things that others don't expect often gives you a critical edge.
- If you can endure in a climate of defeat, you will always win in the end.
- Make a measured decision, set a deadline, and stick to it.
- It only takes 90 minutes to change the course of any challenge.



90 MINUTES PER DAY 'PLUS' GREAT EXPECTATION 'EQUALS' MORE TIME TO GROW

Promoting over 300 great local businesses through their powerful social website and marketing business thebestofShrewsbury.com meant that Andy and Emma Rao were always pushed for time. Their passion for helping their customers prompted them to want to offer even more services, particularly to guide their customers through the ever-changing social media landscape. However, they were simply too busy to do so.

As with so many things in business, indeed in life in general, they found an answer in a counterintuitive method. Despite the enormous pressure on their time, from actually running their existing business, they decided to start dedicating 90 minutes of every single day to finding a way of both developing and growing a social media business.

As a result, Andy says, 'We seem to have miraculously found the time to manage the social media accounts for over a dozen local companies.' It was all down to discipline, time management, planning and taking that valuable time out to work 'on' and not 'in' our own business.

The great thing for the Raos and their customers is that the two businesses complement each other and provide extra value. This simple story of a business that is now generating over £8,000 additional revenue per month is yet another example of how opportunities exist in all businesses, but it is only those that are prepared to stop being too busy who ever find them. Andy and Emma needed to take a disciplined approach to a tried and tested principle they had heard about, even though they thought they didn't have time.



Around the world in 90 minutes

Did you know that the ISS (International Space Station) has taken over 300,000 photographs of the earth, and takes many more every single day? It travels at 17,500 miles per hour, 220 miles above the earth's surface and completes an entire circuit of the world every 90 minutes. The scientists on the station use these photos to study geographic structures, meteorological activity and other major shifts in our planet's daily life. Another vital 90-minute chunk of time from which we all benefit.

Business lesson

The whole concept of working on building your business for 90 minutes each day is really about getting away from the hustle and bustle of actually doing the work and taking a helicopter (or in this case a space station) view of the bigger picture. Astronauts working on the ISS often describe the tranquil, almost spiritual, experience of viewing the planet from space as the most life-changing moments of their life. They are well aware of the wars, the hunger, the inequality and suffering going on below them but they are in a position, far above its anguish, where they can reflect on a higher purpose. Many of those who have been involved in these missions are driven to far greater missions of human accomplishment and drive upon their return. What could 90 minutes outside of the day-to-day do for you?



DELIVERING MASSIVE CHANGE AND AWARD-WINNING BUSINESS GROWTH IN 90-MINUTE CHUNKS

During the last few years, Surrey-based Diamond Logistics has enjoyed an astounding level of success. What began as an ordinary two-site courier firm is now the fastest-growing courier company in the UK with over 30 sites, and counting. The amazing story behind this company was duly revealed to the world when its owner and founder Kate Lester was recognized as the Entrepreneur of the Year at the UK National Entrepreneur's Convention in 2013.

If ever there was an example to follow and learn from for a small business owner it is Kate's – and we can guarantee that her business will be even bigger and better by the time this book ends up in

your hands. In January 2015 the company's monthly turnover eclipsed its entire annual turnover for 2012.

90 minutes every day is the foundation of success

The beginning of this story mentioned the phenomenal success of Diamond Logistics.

However, Kate didn't find immediate success the day she launched her company – and it has not all been smooth sailing to get there. She's endured the same battles, victories, moments of absolute clarity and unfortunate disasters as most other businesses or ventures. But as a self-confessed disciple of good business practice, Kate counts her discipline of putting aside 90 minutes every day to focus on growth as the foundation of all she does.

Kate explains that she spends her 90 minutes each day '… creating marketing ideas and communications to engage and interact with customers, sell services or empower my franchises to sell theirs. 90 minutes is what you need to do to take ideas into the action and implementation stages. It's the number one reason, by a mile, that we've grown so much in the last three years – and it's no coincidence that our meteoric rise started shortly after I met Nigel, joined Entrepreneur's Circle and learned all about the importance of 90-minute chunks.'



MULTI-TASKING, MULTI-ROLE, MULTI-TALENTED MUM MANAGES HER IDEAL LIFESTYLE IN 90-MINUTE CHUNKS

Talented and celebrated voiceover artist Rachael Naylor is a working mum as well as a blogger, radio actor, event organizer and mentor to other people starting out in the industry. So not only is time important to her, she needs to be able to juggle, manipulate and sometimes just squeeze it into the gaps of her busy life. But you only need to hear the professionalism of her work (her voice) to know she is in control. And she attributes much of her success to having been introduced to and mastering the art of committing 90 minutes a day to building her business.

For Rachel, that invaluable time does so much more than just create her marketing ideas and collateral.

She says, 'When you are a busy business owner, sometimes you feel like things are out of control and you are just about coping. Using my 90 minutes allows me to feel in control of my business and move it in the direction I choose.'

5am won't work for everyone . . . when is your optimum time?

Having initially struggled to fit in the time, Rachel decided to experiment with a 5am start so that she could indulge in a 90-minute focused beginning to her day before her two-year-old daughter awoke and grabbed her attention.

That time of day may seem like madness to some, but to others it is the perfect opportunity for creative thought. And it turned out to be ideal for Rachel. She reports, 'I found it very empowering. I would literally jump out of bed at 5am ready to get stuck in. This has become my normal routine and I've found 5am such a fantastic time to be creative with marketing ideas, writing email campaigns, planning how to move my business forward, write blogs, write press releases and generally compose and feel in control of my business.'

The turnover for Rachel's voiceover business is up 300% over last year. Some of the successes her

90-minute business building chunks of time have helped develop include:

- Starting a new business she's called 'The Voice-Over Network' into a monthly event attracting people from throughout the voiceover world. She is also arranging a big summer event with two large sponsors and a guest list including the voice of *The X Factor*.
- Providing a coaching and mentoring service for people starting out as voiceover artists.
- Running master class events under the brand The Voiceover Business Masterclass.
- Contributing to industry magazines and several books as an expert voice in her industry.

Of course, starting the day at 5am won't work for everyone. You have to figure out when your optimum time for your 90 minutes might be. Most of us know whether we are morning people or 'night owls' so that is usually an indicator of when you can utilize your 90-minute super-powers.



The 90-minute revival power-nap

Did you know that a 90-minute nap between 1pm and 4pm has been scientifically proven to help your cognitive functions of creativity, memory retention, logic and even emotional stability? As mentioned elsewhere in this book, this full sleep cycle period is far better for you than shorter naps. However, studies have also shown that a 10–20 minute nap can result in heightened levels of alertness – so grab them when you can too. The same tests showed that a nap for any amount of time between these periods (30–80 minutes) can have negative effects and results in drowsiness or feeling ill.

Business lesson

For most things in business there is a right way and a wrong way to get the best result and it is worth learning and remembering the rules that work best for you. In the same way that getting power-naps wrong can cause negative effects, so can misplaced effort in your business. Expressions like 'busy fool' describe the people that mistake activity for productivity and believe that by doing 'something' they are doing themselves any good. Success simply doesn't work that way. It is far better to take the time to understand the best ways, the methods that are proven to achieve the most significant results, and then put your effort into them. Or in this example, put your power-naps into them.



A DREAM, A HOLIDAY AND A MULTI-MILLION POUND TALE OF REGRET

The Beatles song *Yesterday* by Lennon/McCartney or McCartney/Lennon demonstrates perfectly how acting on a dream can create a legacy.

It is one of those charmingly beautiful songs that everyone knows and most would struggle not to sing along with. Its dreamlike quality is probably due to the fact that Paul woke up with the tune in his head one morning whilst staying at actress Jane Asher's house in Wimpole Street, London. And the reason that its creation is so powerfully relevant to the 90-minute principle is all to do with REM – and we're not talking about the band.

The REM or rapid eye movement section of our sleep patterns is the period in which our

most vividly recalled dreams occur – a period that's usually 90 minutes long. In this way, Paul McCartney composed the tune to *Yesterday* in 90 minutes –albeit in a subconscious state.

Imagine waking with a multi-million pound idea in your head . . .

But the lessons we can glean from the story of this hauntingly sad, yet hope-filled song about regret do not end there. Paul woke up that morning early in 1964 with this mystery tune floating around his mind and headed straight to his piano. He worked out the notes and composed the tune to the song we are all so familiar with today; although its working title for about a year was *Scrambled Eggs* whilst he waited to find the words. Perhaps a reference to the breakfast he had that morning.

After writing the song, Paul played it to several people because he was convinced that he had heard it somewhere else – and that's why he had woken up with a multi-million pound idea in his head. Before pursuing his dream, he felt that he had to do his research amongst the people he trusted to check the validity and possibility of his ambition.

Like so many great ideas – especially those ethereal ones that we doubt at the beginning – this

song needed more work before it became one of the greatest bands of all time's greatest hits of all time. In the months that followed, Paul could often be heard sitting at a piano for an hour or so, shut away from the weight of the moment and the other work that he needed to do that day, trying to find the right lyrics for the song. It was in actual fact a great many 90-minute thinking times later that he finally found the answer.

He had been on holiday (another very smart idea creation strategy for entrepreneurs) in Portugal, staying at a villa owned by The Shadows' guitarist Bruce Welch. Totally refreshed and clearly looking forward to the future, whilst travelling back to the airport at Lisbon (a journey of 90 minutes) he finally settled on the lyrics. So in June 1965 Paul McCartney finished writing *Yesterday*, the song that would consistently achieve the highest radio-play figures for the next 30 years and become the most covered song of all time, with over 3,000 versions recorded.

Business owners and entrepreneurs need to take time out to think and focus

I mentioned at the beginning that there are some slight variations around the credits for this song's authorship and ownership. Apparently Paul and

John Lennon had an agreement that their songs would all be credited Lennon/McCartney regardless of who did what on the record, possibly for the sake of continuity. There have been debates and arguments about this over the years, until on a subsequent Wings album the credit (along with 18 other Beatles tracks) was reversed to read McCartney/Lennon.

The business lesson here is interesting: this track was a sole venture written by Paul McCartney in 90-minute chunks of creative brilliance; but the world never would have heard it without his association with John Lennon. Likewise, business owners and entrepreneurs need to take time out to think and focus but never forget – and wherever possible give credit to – the contributions that those around us have made.

Yesterday has clearly stood the test of time; it is as popular, famous and influential 'today' as when it was born over 50 years ago. It was written during a 90-minute dream and finished whilst on a subsequent 90-minute car journey the following year. Those short sessions of creative brilliance have resulted in many millions of copies being sold and even more millions of pounds being made for the writer and others around him.

But more than that, at least 3,000 other people have made significant profits from that idea being shared and countless billions have enjoyed the ethereal sounds and comforting words that it brought into the world.

PART THREE

Nigel's 90-minute Nuggets in a Nutshell . . .



NIGEL'S SEVEN UNBREAKABLE RULES FOR A SUCCESSFUL 90 MINUTES

Just finding the time for your 90-minute chunks every day won't make you successful in itself, of course. It's *what you do* in that time that will make the difference.

Therefore, this part of the book is dedicated to sharing the techniques and strategies that, when deployed properly, make your daily 90 minutes uber-powerful.

- 90-minute Rule 1: Plan Ahead
- 90-minute Rule 2: Environment Matters
- 90-minute Rule 3: The 80/20 Principle
- 90-minute Rule 4: Regularity
- 90-minute Rule 5: Clarity

- 90-minute Rule 6: Deadlines
- 90-minute Rule 7: The Stuff You Could (Should) Do



90-minute Rule 1: Plan Ahead

You arrive at your desk first thing in the morning rested, determined and ready to face the day. You are full of good intentions and tell yourself that 'it's going to be a good day'. You grab a coffee, go to the computer and check your email.

In effect, what you're doing with this first step of the working day is seeing if anyone else has been kind enough to put their really important priorities on your plate before allowing you to attend to your own. Opening your email first thing allows *others* to set your agenda, establish your priorities, and determine what you spend your time and energy on first thing. When you think about it like that – and if you're serious about achieving supersuccess, then you must admit – it's pretty bonkers behaviour.

Of course, there are times when no one has sent you an email with something important for you to do. You could then have a look at the last to-do list you made – which, by now, is possibly a few

days old – and see if there are any straightforward, not-too-tough jobs you can complete to ease you into your day.

As a last resort you will probably just go and do some work. By the end of the day, even though you've been really busy – and might even have provided some fantastic service for a few customers – you did not move your business forward even one little bit. You neglected the things that are actually the most important if you're to achieve your goals.

This is why planning your 90-minute chunks matters so much.

I never begin a 90-minute session without knowing beforehand EXACTLY what I'm going to get finished in those precious 90 minutes. And this planning will be critical to your success too.

Maybe that description is little harsh; maybe you actually do use a to-do list religiously every day. It could be that the first thing you do – even before indulging in that biggest distraction of the modern business e-era of opening your emails – is to write a list of all the important things that you are going to do that day. Perhaps you even highlight the most essential ones. If this is your approach, then well done; you are almost halfway to being efficient.

But you still have a way to go. So before I move on to expounding the secret of brilliant 'getting more stuff done' planning, let me ask you an uncomfortable question: 'Is there at least one item on your list each day that is designed specifically around getting and keeping customers – or is it all to do with actually doing the work?'

There is seriously powerful science behind this, as we discussed in more detail in the 'science' section of this book. This includes the magical ultradian rhythms, which dictate your concentration and energy levels, the powerful sleep patterns affecting your state of being each day and the optimum time for focusing on any given task at one time.

One of the major tricks that utilizes our brain's processing power is to simply *write your list at the end of the day before*. This will save you loads of time. Think about it: you are in the zone, your brain is in business mode and you are totally aware of what you have and haven't done that day. So, instead of starting the next day cold, you can hit the desk running in the same frame of your mind that you finished the previous one. That should save you 20–30 minutes every morning – and if you really know the value of your time, that matters.

But this discipline, summed up beautifully by the maxim 'today ain't over till tomorrow's planned', gets even better; in fact, it's a wonder of the way the human brain has been designed to operate. It's really quite amazing how your subconscious appears to work overtime whilst you sleep. How often have you woken up with the answer to something that had been troubling you the day before, or with a great idea seemingly from nowhere implanted in your mind? Give your brain a bit of specific food to think upon before you semi-switch it off, and just see what happens.

So, that's a little bit about the method of planning and the science of being prepared (don't worry – we'll expand upon the danger of email addiction later). But let me finish off this section by stressing once again the importance of not just planning what you are going to do each day, but planning to *do more of the important things*. You'll always have the option of doing the easy things, letting yourself get distracted, or just responding to everyone else's beck and call. But unless you plan for growing your business, for getting and keeping customers, you will only ever be striving to keep the status quo – something I promise you is a losing battle. If you want to achieve your dreams and escape mediocrity, then you need to commit to

doing something about it every single day. And all the experience and evidence I've accumulated suggests that you should do that for 90 minutes at a time.



90-minute Rule 2: Environment Matters

Do you remember as a kid trying to pat your head and rub your tummy at the same time?

Of course, it was possible to do with practice, but that is because it becomes 'muscle memory' rather than cognitive behaviour. The idea behind this challenge is that neuroscientists have discovered that the brain cannot actually 'multitask' at all; it simply moves quickly between different things. This 'context switching' causes a phenomenon known as dual-task interference – and the results of numerous studies show that trying to do two things at once reduces the performance level of one or both activities. Apparently the conflicting information bottlenecks at the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain used for processing information.

So, contrary to popular belief, male or female, *none* of us multitasks effectively. It is simply not part of the way in which we humans are made. And this matters a lot for your 90-minute chunks.

To maximize your output and performance you need to be able to work, uninterrupted, in an environment that is conducive to you doing good work. And for that to happen you need to create an environment where you will not be disturbed. That requires three things: planning, rules and discipline.

Planning

You must set up your workspace correctly for you, with everything that you might need close at hand. I tend to work from piles rather than files, for example; so my desk needs to be big enough to house all the projects I'm working on. And I may need to access information from any of them during any given 90-minute session.

If I'm doing marketing then I often refer to things I've learned from other people, so I have lots of shelves with all of my favourite business books. I also have a big drawer full of 'swipe files' – things I've seen and collected because they might be useful inspiration or ideas one day.

Another really useful thing for me is being able to use two big computer screens when working. This allows me to easily see all the information I need. So I have made that part of *my* 'perfect environment'.

I can't emphasize enough the difference it makes when you set up the perfect working space for you.

Other things to consider might be: What goes on the walls? What kind of lighting do you want? What's the level of comfort and airflow? How about outside noise? These things really do make a difference to your concentration levels and can go a long way in keeping you at your peak.

Rules

Both you and your staff – and your family – need to know the rules of your 90-minute chunks. The most important one for everyone else to recognize and follow is that *you are not to be interrupted*. There are a few ways to convey this. Many years ago I started putting a sign on my door during my 90-minute sessions that said 'Do NOT disturb unless building is on fire.' It only took one disciplinary for my staff to understand that I was deadly serious.

However, *you* must also follow your own rules diligently – and that means you do not allow anything else to get your attention during this most important time of your entire day. Even my wife and children know that they can't get hold of me during my 90-minute chunks.

And if you're serious about adopting this daily discipline, then it means doing the following:

- Switching off your mobile phone, putting it on silent or simply out of sight.
- Putting your landline on divert or 'off the hook', without any beeps or flashing lights. Someone else needs to answer the phone whilst you're in the 90-minute zone. Compromise on this and you'll massively dilute the amount of progress you make.
- Switching off any other messaging services or automatic feeds – no Facebook, Twitter or the like is allowed.
- Turning off your email – ideally before you start so that you are not even tempted to look. I always close down my email last thing at night so I'm not tempted to have a little peek in the morning until after I've completed my 90 minutes. Again, the second you cheat and take a peek, it gets inside your head, distracts your concentration and dilutes your focus. Anything sitting there can wait 90 minutes – I promise.
- Banishing all other distractions from view (or ear) – television, radio, any music that isn't conducive to your concentration.

Discipline

So you are in the perfect physical environment, you cannot possibly be disturbed and you've already planned what you are going to achieve over the next 90 minutes. You are also equipped with all the motivation that you need because you know that this time is helping you to realize your biggest goals; for you, your business and the people you love the most. All you need to do now is act upon your convictions and be brilliant.



90-minute Rule 3: The 80/20 Principle

You may be familiar with the Pareto principle, also known as the 80/20 rule. It's the observation that in a great many scenarios and circumstances 80% of the result comes from 20% of the activity or effort. It's definitely true in business.

It originated with the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, who figured out that 20% of Italy's population owned 80% of the property in 1906. It was further developed by Joseph Juran, a quality management expert, who applied it to various business principles.

Other areas where the rule seems to work include:

- Health and safety: 20% of the hazards cause 80% of the injuries.
- Sport: 20% of a football squad score 80% of the goals.
- Fashion: 20% of a person's wardrobe will be worn 80% of the time.

- Mechanics: 20% of tools in a toolbox are used for 80% of jobs.
- Business: 20% of customers generate 80% of the revenue.
- Reading: 20% of this book will represent 80% of its value to you.
- Teaching: 80% of a teacher's time is used by 20% of their students.
- Telephone: 20% of your contacts receive 80% of your calls.
- Your home: 80% of your time is spent in 20% of the rooms.

It is obviously not an absolutely exact science; there may be the odd 25/75 or 15/85 in there. But the ubiquitous nature of the principle in almost every area of life is very difficult to ignore. You may have already guessed where this is going, but just in case I'll lay it out for you here: If you take 20% of an average 7.5 hour working day you end up with exactly 90 minutes.

The truth is that all reasonable, 'scientific' evidence points to the fact that a well-planned, totally focused and uninterrupted 90-minute chunk should deliver the most effective 80% of any given day. So what

would any diligent, determined and ambitious business owner do when faced with that fact?

Another way in which the 80/20 rule is very relevant to the whole area of committing 90 minutes a day to getting and keeping customers is that of delegation. You see, next to distraction, poor organization and email, the single biggest reason why business owners choose 'not to commit to regular, quality planning time' is wilful stupidity.

Too many business owners seem incapable of letting go of menial, administrative tasks.

They may not take up 80% of your day – but it is certainly worth considering the suggestion that 80% of what you currently do is likely to be a highly ineffective use of your time. And you pay a significant price for that inefficiency, especially in terms of the 'opportunity cost' – i.e. what you could be doing if you stopped doing all the stuff that you could delegate or outsource.

Here are the top ten tasks that any ambitious business owner should NOT spend their time doing. You can think of it as the '£10 an hour' work that stops you doing the '£10,000 an hour work':

1. Bookkeeping
2. Inputting data

3. Answering the telephone
4. Sending out invoices
5. Taking basic orders
6. Sorting the post
7. Doing the banking
8. General administrative tasks
9. Research
10. Diary management

Of course, taken to its natural, logical conclusion this approach is also relevant away from the workplace. For example, two of my most valuable 'employees' are my gardener and my housekeeper. We even have our very own butler in the office to make sure everything is just as it should be – in perfect working order. They prevent me from having to worry about any of the domestic tasks around the home – freeing me up to do more of the '£10,000 an hour work' in the business.

So, if you spend time each week shopping at the supermarket, doing laundry, cutting grass and cleaning – then recognize that it's a completely sensible, justifiable cost to get some help in to free you up to do high-value work moving your business

forward. There will be many services available in your local area: domestic cleaners, gardeners, personal shoppers, ironing services, mobile car washing, window cleaners and pretty much anything else you can think of. In fact, if you come across a gap in the market – i.e. a service that isn't available in your local area – you could spend a useful 90-minute slot coming up with a business idea to solve it.



90-minute Rule 4: Regularity

We've talked a lot about 90-minute chunks and how valuable – priceless even – they are if you want to build a successful business. But in reality it's not about that at all. I can trace some of my biggest wins and most profitable ideas back to single, specific 90-minute sessions and so-called eureka moments on individual days. I have also had a few duds – times where I sat down in the perfect environment, with a goal, a deadline and a focused mind, but nothing happened.

But the fact is that unless I made 90-minute chunks a habitual part of my daily routine and committed myself to it, *neither* of these would have ever happened. If every time I had a dud (which isn't that often, I hasten to add!), I gave up and decided it didn't work, then I would never get to the good stuff. And if every time I had a great session, I stopped and got too busy with it, I would only ever have seen minimal success.

Consider these examples:

- Going to the gym once, or even once a month, will not get you fit.
- Hitting a hole-in-one on the 9th but hacking round the other 17 holes won't win you a golf tournament.
- One amazing singer and a load of tone-deaf ones will not make a good choir.
- Running the first mile in under four minutes and walking the rest won't win you a marathon.
- Being able to cook a mean seafood linguine but having no more recipes in your repertoire won't give you much hope for *Master Chef*.
- Just four or five great games in a season will not win your team the Premier League title (or even the Championship – come on Leeds).
- Cleaning your teeth once a week is a bad way to develop close friendships!

You get the drift.

Hopefully you will agree by now that putting aside 90-minute chunks to build your business is a good idea. You might even be convinced, like I and many other successful entrepreneurs are, that as a fundamental principle, there are very few practices that

are more important if you want to build a successful business.

So, what's stopping you making it part of your daily routine?

Brain science has made some really interesting observations around habit building, which could help you here. We often attribute the term 'habit' to something negative and something beyond our control. But what if you could train yourself to develop good behaviours on purpose, simply by applying discipline and a little science?

There have been many books written on this subject and many differing opinions abound. But here are a few basic observations that, as far as I can see, are common throughout all of the research:

> We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.
>
> *Aristotle*

1. **You have to *want* to change your behaviour**
   Desiring a result is so important in anything you try to achieve, which is the point of this book; to help you see that the principle is something worth trying. But unless you really, really want the end result, you won't establish the daily discipline – because it won't matter that much.

2. **Set a goal and plan to do it**
   If you think that 90 minutes is a good idea, then fill your diary with it now. Not just for today and tomorrow, but for the next month (you can give yourself a day off at the weekend). Schedule the time and make it part of your daily routine. Make it an 'appointment' in your diary. Commit.

3. **Repetition and momentum**
   Some say it takes 21 days to form a habit; others quote higher or lower numbers. And some say you cannot create a habit this way at all. But there is no doubt whatsoever that if you did something today that you enjoyed and recognized as being valuable to your business, then you are more likely to do it tomorrow.

   And if you decide not to start until next week, the likelihood is that you will never start at all.

   So the secret is to just go and start NOW.

4. **Give yourself a reward**
   People who talk about positive habit forming often add a bit at the end about rewarding yourself for stopping smoking or starting going to the gym. Do that by all means with your 90 minutes habit; but I can think of few rewards

that will match the success that this practice will give you in your business and the feeling you will get from seeing great things happen (other than chocolate possibly).



90-minute Rule 5: Clarity

A short story of success

Once upon a time a man had a dream. Eventually that dream became an ambition and soon it began to occupy his mind and a little part of his heart. As he became more attached to this desire he found himself giving his dream a name. He simply called it Success. The problem with Success, however, was that it was still some way off within the reality of his life – at worst an imagination, at best a distant horizon.

Time ticked by and what had once been an inspiration slowly became a burden; and where hope's flame had burned so bright, mere embers were left to cast a weary shadow across each passing day.

Sometime later the man was given a piece of wisdom with which to stir those memories of a dream. He learned that success was not the destination at all – it was in actual fact the journey. Armed with this power he relit the passion in his heart and set out a path to its front door. He labelled each step of

that journey with a badge called Success. And every day he stepped forward with deliberate purpose and belief…assured that he was being successful.

Every deliberate step you take, however tiny, towards your biggest, brightest, boldest goals gives you the right to call yourself successful.

This story demonstrates that you cannot necessarily change the entire landscape of your world overnight, but you can make a change today, which will take you closer to your bigger goal. But, of course, you must know what the bigger picture is in order to do that.

You need to have very clear, concrete goals

I spoke earlier about creating the perfect environment. In my office I have a large whiteboard – several, in fact – with the headline projects that I am working towards and each one's deadline dates. I realize it would be simply impossible to finish any of these in one go; this is hence why they fall under the category of big goals and why I break each one down into smaller steps. Each of these smaller targets has its own deadline and usually requires even smaller, daily, targeted steps to complete. Basically, each 90-minute chunk of time I put aside to work on marketing, research or planning business growth

is simply a single step within a much bigger concrete plan.

Here is an example for an ambitious small business. Let's imagine that your goal is to get to a turnover of £1m per year. That's a nice goal, isn't it? But it isn't a concrete one – because it has no plan, deadline, pipeline or pathway attached to it, and therefore probably won't happen.

So let's keep that same goal. What if you worked out that you needed to achieve £83,333 per month turnover and you were going to reach that target within the next four months? There's a more realistic figure to aim for, but we are still not quite there.

Suppose that you currently have 50 customers spending an average of £1,000 per month with you (hey, it's a hypothetical example – roll with me). So your current turnover is £50,000 per month or £600,000 per year. It doesn't take much to work out that you need to find another 33 customers in the next four months to hit your first target.

If only business maths was really that simple! But this example allows you to see that it's not the numbers that are important; it is the mere fact of *having something to measure*. It's *your* numbers and *your* goals that count. This example emphasizes what

you need: a crystal-clear, laser-focused, distraction-dissolving vision of exactly what you must do to achieve success – find 33 new customers in the next four months, which comes out to roughly two per week.

So when you sit down to do your 90-minute sessions each day you know what you are trying to achieve, what you are aiming for, what your bigger picture is.

The other really important thing about having a concrete goal is *not* to keep it to yourself.

That is, don't give yourself the opportunity to let yourself off the hook.

If what you are doing is truly important to you – something that you have decided will be good for your business, something that you genuinely believe in rather than simply picked for the sake of a goal – then tell someone else. In fact, tell *as many people as possible*. It will help you get there.

Be prepared to put your reputation on the line. Because, I promise you, if you are anything like most successful entrepreneurs, you will not want other people to view you as someone who misses targets or fails. This is a good thing; it makes you absolutely, unequivocally more likely to succeed

when you have shared your goal with others. You've committed.

And make sure your team know the bigger goal, too. The more they understand where you're heading – and the reasons why – the easier it is for them to buy into what you're striving to do and help you get there.



90-minute Rule 6: Deadlines

This is actually Botty Rule 5 (if you have read my other book!) but I have included it here because it is so relevant to 90-minute chunks. Everything I have talked about so far revolves around having time integrity, working to set goals and working to deadlines. In short, 'deadlines get stuff done'.

There is a much bigger principle at play here. In my business I use this little phrase when something important needs to get done. I ask myself or the relevant member of my team: 'If I had to do X by Y, or else I die, could I get it done?'

For example, if I decide that collating a list of all the customers that have bought from me in the past, but not in the last 12 months, and sending them a sales letter with a great offer would be a good idea – then I ask myself the golden question: 'If I had to commit time to updating and sorting out a lapsed customer list, designing a brilliant offer and writing a great sales letter by Friday, or I die …could I do it?'

The honest answer would be 'yes'. Definitely.

So my only decision now is: 'What have I got planned between now and Friday that is more important than getting that task done?' After all, my life depends on it!

I realize that sounds very simplistic, but being successful in business is really simple if you apply the basic, proven rules. It just takes clarity of thinking and the courage to make some straightforward decisions.

When it comes to applying deadlines in your 90-minute sessions, you really need to test and find out what you are capable of doing. One technique I've found works really well – but few people use it – is that 'end times matter'. That means that every piece of work I do in my 90 minutes has a specific chunk of time allocated to it. So I might allow myself 60 minutes to review this month's Google Adwords campaigns, or two whole 90-minute chunks to craft a new sales letter or web page.

The principle is that each piece of work has a specific amount of time allocated to it. It has an end time, and that end time matters. Without it, work has an awful habit of expanding. It takes longer than you ever imagined it would or could. Deadlines help protect you against that.



90-minute Rule 7: The Stuff You Could (Should) Do

I often get asked to explain what *exactly* I do in my 90-minute chunks to build my business. It's nothing very complicated or difficult to explain – so here's a list.

Writing emails
Either single emails or auto-responder campaigns. These are usually written to a specific segment of my list rather than everyone on it. Sometimes they're news relevant, sharing valuable information or sales communications. I write a lot of emails – because they're the single biggest driver of sales into our business. Once you've worked out what your most effective marketing activity is, that should be the one at the top of your list.

Lapsed customer communications
These can be letters, emails or gifts, and usually with an offer or perhaps an emotionally worded 'did we do something wrong?' style message. These are a massively powerful marketing tool.

Auto-responders
A suite of associated emails that are sent as a result of a prospect's or customer's action. Once written, you can use these over and over again for different customers and generate really valuable engagement and trust-building. Ultimately, your auto-responder campaigns should lead to a sale.

Follow-up letters
This is a simple 'keeping in touch' tool that pre-empts a lapsed customer letter. It may be that your product has a long buying cycle so you just need an excuse to keep in touch. Say you fit kitchens; you might want to send each kitchen you fit a birthday card, or a craft tutor might write to see how someone is getting along with the needlework course they sold them six months ago.

Creating avatars
One of the most overlooked yet incredibly powerful marketing tools is to understand what your perfect customer looks like. I can't think of many things more valuable during a 90-minute session than really nailing their identity – details like name, job, age, family, fears, desires, needs, other interests, etc. I do a lot of this. I really go deep and get into the minds and psyche of my customers.

List building
There are so many ways to build your database it really needs a whole book of its own. But once you realize that your database is the single most valuable asset in your business, you will want to spend time nurturing it and adding more of the right people to it, as I do.

Squeeze page hooks
Crafting the headlines and valuable tasters that will attract your ideal prospects and prove to them that you have something that will be of value to them.

Valuable giveaways
Writing the content for giveaways on your website: PDF downloads or videos that will teach your customers something of value to them, in exchange for their name and email address. The true beauty of these, if you get it right, is that you will also be demonstrating your expertise and creating the thought: 'I got this for free; what would I get if I paid for it?'

Segmenting your database
If you have determined who your perfect customer is, then you will soon realize that a lot – perhaps most – of the people on your list do not fit that profile. You can still keep in touch with them, but identifying the right 'who' allows you to target the right

value to the ones that really matter. And even within the most important areas of your list there will still be opportunities to segment further, and offer even more distinctly niche messages to the right people. Familiarity with your list is a very powerful thing and time well spent.

Other people's customers

It is worth thinking about and exploring who else has a similar client base to you, and how you might be able to engage with them. Partnerships, joint ventures, sharing lists or simply buying them are a great way of quickly meeting some of your sales targets.

Facebook Ads

As I'm writing this in the autumn of 2014, Facebook Ads are the most lucrative form of marketing we're doing right now. They have the power to offer stunning results. So crafting effective ads, testing ideas and maximizing engagement is a big part of my 90 minutes right now.

Writing headlines: I write a lot of headlines – hundreds each month, in fact. Our customers – and likely yours as well – are constantly faced with marketing and sales messages from all angles. To make yours really stand out, you need to come up with headlines that work. Getting the right headline for

the right customer is massively important and is well worth your time.

Reviewing results of your marketing

We are no longer in an age where understanding the effectiveness of marketing is left to chance. Whether it is Google Analytics or Adwords, tracking results or comparing how successful other marketing has been, these kinds of tasks are vital to fine-tuning your efforts. Every penny we spend on marketing is accountable – and this is how/when we review performance.

Scripting videos

With the ever-increasing influence of video marketing, through YouTube and other online platforms, I'm finding more and more that I'm crafting video scripts for most of our products. These tend to be for specific products but you may also consider doing a really professional-looking video for the home page of your website. I write these scripts and come up with the ideas for these videos in my 90-minute chunks.

Testimonials

Writing to customers asking for specific testimonials or crafting case studies to highlight a particular area where you add benefit is very effective support for your marketing. This is also another excuse to

keep in touch with good customers – and it also helps show them how much you value their business. This happens for me in at least one 90-minute chunk a month.

Planning promotions
Think about ways to boost sales through a one-off campaign or to coincide with a particular event – a business anniversary, an industry-specific event or a national day (Easter, Valentine's Day, etc.). We usually work about three months ahead; this allows me to schedule time in early October to plan our New Year promotions, for instance.

Crafting great offers
This is another massive area that deserves a book of its own, because it's difficult to get right. However, when you do, it makes a heck of an impact on sales. So I spend quite a bit of time each month during my 90-minute chunks working out and crafting different offers.

Thinking
Call me old fashioned, but I figured out a long time ago that an hour of high-quality thinking can be worth as much to my business as a month of hard work – so I have 90-minute chunks set aside each month to think about specific topics or challenges. Thinking is vastly under-rated and massively

overlooked by so many in our 'always on', super-busy society. Schedule an hour out to think properly, and you'll be amazed at what happens as a result.

Developing new product ideas

Once again, this does not necessarily mean working on the full nuts and bolts of the product – but can certainly involve creating the design and developing the value offering. Think about what your customers buy now and what else you could give them that will add benefit and build your relationship with them.

Creating premium products

Similar to creating brand new products is the idea of developing a premium version of what people already buy from you. Almost without exception, across all business types, it has been proven that 20% of your customers will pay more for a premium version of your standard offering simply by you making it available. And the truth is that there is usually no more than a minimal cost to make a slightly superior, higher-priced item.

Reviewing and updating websites

We have over 50 web pages live at any one time that drive customers into our business. I write all of them in my 90-minute chunks – and they change regularly as we test new stuff.

Writing sales letters

Direct mail is very important in today's marketing, and we get great returns from it. So I'm always trying to beat last month's conversion. I'm amazed that more businesses don't send more letters – especially to existing or past customers – since it's one of the most lucrative things we can do to grow our business.

CONCLUSION

Maybe it was coincidence that Dr Kleitman lived to be well over 100 years old. It is possible that Alfred would have still become great without his candle clock. What if Paul had never dreamed of *Yesterday* and Martin Luther had decided not to plan the foundation of his dream? It is entirely possible that driven people, business owners like those mentioned in this book, would have still accomplished outstanding results without committing to working on getting and keeping customers for 90 minutes each day. But one thing is for sure …

Of all the success that anybody has been able to achieve, ever, anywhere in the world and at any time in history, their chances have been significantly increased by their commitment to their cause. And it is not just commitment in terms of their belief and passion that drove those successful people to achieve the things they set their hearts on, but that they were prepared to dedicate time to reaching their goals.

So as you finish reading this book, and are hopefully inspired by its stories and lessons, please do not

go away in a state of lazy optimism simply thinking 'that was nice for them'. Instead, examine the goals that you have been clinging on to for so long and just try putting aside a little bit of quality time (perhaps 90 minutes might be a good idea) to pursue them. Start by doing that today and plan to do the same tomorrow and the next day, and the next …

Go on, try it, we dare you … You might just find that it works.

APPENDIX

Vanquishing Vampires and Valuing Your Time . . .

BANISHING THE TIME VAMPIRES

This book has been all about extolling the virtues of taking 90 minutes out of your (busy, time-constrained, under-pressure and massively in-demand from all angles) day to focus on building your business. We've strived to prove that applying this magical time period within your daily life can, quite literally, change the shape and future of your business. It has shared many world-changing and everyday examples of how 90 minutes have made a massive difference in a multitude of situations and even backed it up with documented scientific evidence.

However, it would be remiss of me not to deal with the arch enemies of a diligent commitment to growing your business each and every day. These cape-wearing, time-sucking, anti-wealth creatures of both the night and prime-time daylight are everywhere. Known to the wary as Time Vampires they stalk the most determined of entrepreneurs and go-getters, looking for any weakness or opportunity to throw a distraction in their path.

For you to overcome them you need to learn to recognize them, load the 90 minutes silver bullet into your attitude and then set about being totally committed. Let me introduce you to the Time Vampires and how to defeat them.

THE TRUTH ABOUT TIME

Okay, no beating around the bush. Here's the truth: most of us don't use our time to the best of our ability.

If your business is not where you want it to be or if you're not having enough time off doing other things in your life that you want to do, then you need to face up to the reality that you are not applying 'time integrity' to yourself.

Time is, without doubt, the most precious currency that any of us has at our disposal. We can always replace money and business, but we can never replace time. We all have the same 1,440 minutes to utilize today, and 168 hours in our week – no more and no less. It's how we use this time that will ultimately be the key defining factor in the level of success that we achieve with our business and fulfilment we attain in our life.

What I've learned over the last few years is that most people tend to take the path of least resistance for

pretty much everything in their lives. They want and seek out quick fixes to their problems; anything that is a fast, painless solution that will cost them as little discomfort as possible.

However, I assume that you are reading this book because you are not 'most people' or at the very least you have decided that you do not want to be 'ordinary' any more. And that is definitely the case if you run your own business. The truth is that there really are no quick fixes when it comes to managing your time effectively. But with a little learning, a lot of commitment and a firm understanding of your goals, it *is* possible. My hope is that this appendix will provide you with some practical guidance and ground rules for helping you get rid of the Time Vampires (or anti-90-minuters) that plague all of us and in doing so help you to get a lot more stuff done.

WHERE ARE YOU HEADING?

The giant leap that I personally made in my productivity and ability to get stuff implemented came the day I was able to crystallize, really clearly, exactly what I wanted to achieve and where I was going. This still holds true today and I don't know how I could function in business without this level of clarity.

It is all a matter of priorities – and for me (as I'm sure it will be for most of you) the most important thing in my life is my family. So every October half-term holiday I sit down with my wife and we set the goals for the business for the following year. We start to plan from the top down by coming up with a very clear goal as to how much profit the business needs to generate in order to fund all the things that we need and want to do as a family. I commend this approach to you with every ounce of my being. It is such a powerful and critical weapon in the war against Time Vampires because my family is the most important thing to me in the whole

world. What better motivation could there possibly be?

Once you have a completely clear picture of where you want to be it provides the magnetic north for what you spend your time doing. Without this clarity you leave yourself at the mercy of the Time Vampires, the distractions and the procrastinations that we all face on a day-to-day basis.

So step number one to getting more stuff done is sitting back and writing down, as clearly as you possibly can, exactly where you want to be six months, nine months, twelve months from now.

WHAT'S THE MOST EFFECTIVE USE OF MY TIME RIGHT NOW?

Once you have a clear goal you are able to accurately answer this second question. Quite simply, 'will what you are doing right now, this minute, move you tangibly and manifestly towards where you want to be?'

If not, then you'd better stop doing it and find something that will.

This question is one of the most valuable tools in my box. I ask it of myself many times each day. When I review my diary with my PA and look at what is happening in the coming weeks, this is the question that I have in mind and it helps me ensure that a very high proportion of my time is spent on the things that will move me closer to where I want to be. With this type of clarity I am able to know how to make the most effective use of the hours and minutes that I have.

If you're serious about achieving super-success with your business then, genuinely, you can't afford not to spend some time thinking about, and properly answering, these two questions.

This book has been all about the importance of taking out 90-minute chunks of time each day, focusing on getting and keeping customers in your business. I would suggest that it would be a very worthwhile use of your 90-minute session tomorrow to address the first of the questions above. Write down specifically, where you want to be in your business and what you, personally, want to get out of it. What will your drawings be, your turnover, your number of customers, your profit, at the end the next year? You need to set out some hard measures like this to crystallize your goals and then you can start to assess and understand how you're spending your time and the extent to which it's moving you towards them. This is serious stuff and it is important to learn to be strict with yourself.

KICK THE PROCRASTINATION HABIT

Another part of applying 'time integrity' with your time is kicking the procrastination habit. Here are a few tips that I find work well for me in this regard:

- **Learn to take advantage of small segments of time**
  Procrastinators are notorious for thinking they need a huge block of time to really get started on something. We've talked a lot about 90 minutes, but it is also worth learning to use the five, ten and 15 minute slots that you find during the day to organize yourself, break down the things you want to do into steps and start working on them.

- **Getting going gets things done**
  Remember that big, difficult-looking tasks that you really don't want to do usually become a lot easier once you start doing them. I've never met

anybody who doesn't relate to that statement. We all encounter it most weeks. Just remember that once you get stuck in, you'll get this job done much more quickly than you ever expected – and it will rarely be as painful.

- **Small steps make big projects easy**
  Break down your projects into small manageable steps and work on completing one step at a time. By doing this, you start to see immediate progress – and it's progress that matters here. Don't think that the only time you've done well is when you've finished an entire project or piece of work. That's simply not true – if you've completed a small step, as a result of a preset target, which moves you towards a bigger project, which is in line with your ultimate life goals, then you have just achieved a huge success.

- **Be realistic about time**
  Procrastinators tend to be poor time estimators and they carry unrealistic expectations about what they can do in a given period of time. Learn how much you can get done in any given amount of time and work that understanding into your task planning.

- **Set end times**
  This is one of my secret weapons. I set end times and deadlines for pretty much everything I do (and what my team does as well). It keeps everybody focused on getting the job done and without end times work has a very nasty habit of expanding and so progress is slowed. Honestly, end times are genius and just deploying them will, of itself, dramatically improve your productivity.

- **Schedule and allow yourself free time**
  Despite what some people think, I am not a workaholic. I have a very active social life, take lots of holidays and have a very healthy relationship with my wife, my children and the friends that are dear to me. The truth is that long periods of intense work don't do anyone any good. Your effectiveness diminishes, your thinking blurs and contrary to what you might think, momentum suffers as well. So schedule the breaks each day and week and don't feel guilty about taking them. You deserve them.

- **Be honest about when your 'best' work time is**
  I'm a morning person. All my best work gets done before noon and if I want to make rapid progress on a piece of work I'll just set the alarm for 5 o'clock and roll into the office in my

pyjamas by 5:05am. I can get two days' worth of work done before the staff arrive at 9:00am. What this also means, of course, is that I learned quite some time ago that I am rubbish at doing work in the evenings. There's just no point. For whatever reason, be it my biorhythms, fatigue or simply getting older, you will never catch me trying to do meaningful work of an evening because I know that I'll be so much less productive at it and less efficient than I will be during the morning hours. You are the boss in your business and therefore you get to decide when you do your best thinking and best productive work and you have responsibility for making sure you're available to do those things at that time.

- **Learn to delegate responsibilities**
  Procrastinators often believe they should be able to do everything themselves. This is completely unrealistic – and again, going back to that first question and the clarity of your goals, it should be obvious, in almost every case, that if your goal is suitably challenging then you can't possibly get there by doing everything yourself. You must learn to delegate tasks of lesser importance (i.e. those that you spend time on currently but that do not directly move you

towards where the business wants to be) to someone else. Delegating this kind of work will free up your time so you can devote more to what is most important. One of the genuine secrets of super-success is to do only what you're really good at and outsource everything else to others.

EIGHT TIME-MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS THAT WILL HELP YOU GET MORE STUFF DONE

1. **Your environment**
   To produce prolific work you need to be able to function in a workspace that suits you and facilitates the effective production of work. This includes computers that work fast and are reliable, the right amount of desk space so you have what you need at hand, the lighting, and what's on the walls. Your environment should be appropriately stimulated, including blocking out distractions, the impossibility of you being interrupted and easy access to everything that you need. This stuff matters.

2. **Avoid busyness**
   Stop yourself and your staff from getting caught in activities and details that don't matter.

Activity is definitely not the same as productivity – don't ever forget that. It all comes down to one of the most important questions a business owner can ask themselves four to five times each and every day: 'Is what you are doing, right now, meaningful and moving you towards where you want to be?'

3. **Be aware of Murphy's law**
   The truth is that everything takes longer, and costs more, than you think it will. What can go wrong usually does and nothing is as easy as it appears. Be prepared for the worst so you are always in the best position to deal with anything that can stand in your way.

4. **You must plan**
   You need to determine what needs to be done (and it's a whole lot easier to do this once you can make those decisions in relation to a goal that you are clear about). And because you are consciously in charge you also get to decide who does it and by when. Use this power responsibly and, whatever you do, don't just turn up to work tomorrow and leave it until you sit down at your desk before you decide what you're going to do. That would be bonkers.

5. **You must have priorities**
   All super-successful people have a systematic arrangement of activities based on their order of importance. I certainly do. The things that are at the top of my priority list are the ones that matter most to the success of my business and the achievement of my goals. Responding to emails from other people who are (albeit unwittingly) trying to hijack my agenda don't get a look in until the important stuff has been done.

6. **Recognize the 80/20 rule**
   This was covered in the main body of the book but it is worth reiterating here. In almost all circumstances, 80% of all results are derived from 20% of your efforts – which is another brilliant reason why you should be setting aside those 90-minute chunks every day – and making sure that you're doing the right things in those 90 minutes.

7. **Stay proactive**
   You must not be reactive to situations in business but, instead, stay on the front foot and maintain proactivity by using positive movements to take it towards the accomplishment of your goals. If you find yourself getting pushed

or pulled by others into doing things that are not moving you towards where you want to be, then you'll need to stop and resist with all your might. Because it's your life, your time and your success that are at stake here.

8. **Eliminate the time wasters**
   Anything and anyone who side-tracks you from the achievement of your goals need to be banished from your life. The first steps towards this are banishing them completely from your 90-minute chunks of time. At least that way you're able to put in that focused time that in truth, on its own, is capable of transforming the vast majority of businesses. If you are weak here, however, you will undermine everything else that you're striving to do.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Nigel Botterill: The man who built nine separate million-pound-plus businesses, from scratch, in just eight years. As the driving force and inspiration behind the Entrepreneur's Circle, the UK's largest membership organization dedicated to helping small businesses grow, Nigel has brightened the business landscape for literally thousands of small business owners. He hosts the annual UK National Entrepreneur's Convention and also wrote the best-selling business book of 2011, the phenomenally inspiring *Botty's Rules*.

Martin Gladdish: A freelance writer, business storyteller and author of the much-loved, inspirational book *The Lazy Optimist* (a quirky, ever-so-gently provoking, just-go-and-do-it story for anyone who ever had a dream). Martin has worked in the Entrepreneur's Circle as part of Nigel's Business Growth Advisor team for several years and is renowned as a first-rate copywriter. He is also an amateur magician and can often be seen sharing business lessons through magic tricks at business and networking events.

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- A tick-sheet of the things you should be doing in your 90 minutes – and those you shouldn't!
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