

# Ready Fire Aim

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**EXCLUSIVE  
EXCERPT**

Zero to \$100 Million in No  
Time Flat

by Michael Masterson

Dear Info-Marketing Entrepreneur,

You hold in your hands an exclusive preview of my new book, *Ready Fire Aim: Zero to \$100 Million in No Time Flat*.

You are one of the first persons - besides my copy editors and my publisher - to see these ideas. In fact, certain executives at the publishing company didn't think it was a good idea to release any excerpts of the book before the official release date of Jan. 4, 2008.

However, I overruled them. I wanted you to have this because it introduces an important idea about entrepreneurship that we will be talking about at the conference.

In one sense, this book is the end of many months of brainstorming, writing, and editing. But really it's the culmination of my four decades as an entrepreneur and business builder.

I've been involved with starting and growing businesses for more than 25 years. During that time I've learned a lot, including how to overcome the obstacles that *every* business, no matter what the industry, will face throughout its life.

Just as important, I've learned how to recognize and take advantage of the opportunities that come your way every day.

I've put everything I've learned into this book. The result is a step by step guide to taking your business from start-up to a \$100 million, even \$300 million or more company.

As you will see the importance of speed...how to jump start a stalled business...and why selling is your first business priority are some of the major themes mentioned in these first couple of chapters.

But that's only three of the *dozens* of important secrets and discoveries that are contained in *Ready Fire Aim*. In fact, I would not be surprised if you find something of value that you can implement in your own business on *every* page.

Enjoy. My only regret is that you have to wait until January to read the rest of it!

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Masterson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M'.

Michael Masterson

To get your own copy of Ready, Fire, Aim which recently hit #1 on Amazon.com [click here now!](#)

# **Introduction**

## **The Very Best Job in the World**

Vanessa dropped two plates of eggs and bacon on our table, a stainless steel and Formica heirloom of another generation.

“Got any hot sauce?” Harry asked.

“You gonna use it if I bring it?” she countered.

Harry looked up. Vanessa was smiling. Harry smiled back.

“You’re kinda cute,” he said.

“Don’t kid yourself, honey,” Vanessa replied. “I’m very cute.”

She grabbed a bottle of Tabasco from a nearby table, slapped it down in front of Harry, and sauntered away. Harry watched her backside as she disappeared into the kitchen.

“I feel like I’m in an old movie,” he said, salting his eggs.

“The Green Owl is old Florida,” I told him. “It’s not trendy, but it works.”

Harry looked around. Every table was full, and every stool around the central counter was occupied. Most of the crowd was dressed in working clothes – jeans or uniforms or business suits. And everybody seemed to know everyone else.

“A local place,” he said.

“That’s the way I like it.”

We began to eat. The eggs were good. The bacon was crisp, the coffee hot.

We talked about business. Harry, a career diplomat with USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development),\* had just begun a new post in Central America. He talked about his efforts to master Spanish, and about the challenge of motivating a staff that had been there before him, would be there after him, and was used to doing things “the old way.”

“And since they are government employees, it’s nearly impossible to fire them,” I added, sympathetically.

He asked me about my Latin American business interests – a real estate brokerage in Panama, a publishing venture in Buenos Aires, and a residential resort development in Nicaragua.

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\* USAID is the independent government agency that provides non-military economic and humanitarian foreign aid.

“They are all doing very well,” I told him.

Then Harry leaned forward and asked the question I have been asked a hundred times in my career, the question I always have trouble answering:

*“You know, I’ve never really understood – what exactly do you do?”*

### **A Question They Never Stop Asking**

I shook my head and smiled.

“You’ve known me for 25 years,” I teased. “How could you *not* know what I do for a living? I know what you do!”

“But you ... you do so many damn things. You are involved with a business in Ireland that publishes a travel and retirement magazine, a business in Baltimore that sells vitamins, a business in London that sells academic books to universities – and I don’t know what else!”

Harry had only scratched the surface. I have an active interest in the largest financial newsletter businesses in both the U.S. and England, a company that teaches people how to make career changes, about two dozen real estate businesses (including two that are in the \$50+ million level), a public relations business, several health-oriented companies, businesses in France, Australia,

Germany, Spain, South Africa, and India. I have owned wholesale, retail, and direct-to-consumer businesses selling everything from perfume to televisions to horoscopes, and I even own a few small restaurants and hotels and oil wells.

Yet I spend most of my time writing.

Harry was right to be confused. I sometimes have trouble understanding it myself. I do know this:

*I have what must be the greatest job in the world!*

I work when I want, where I want, and with whom I want, doing only what I want to do. If that isn't the definition of the best job in the world, what is?

### **The Four W's of Career Satisfaction: Demanding the Best From Your Job**

They say that the three most important questions in life are:

- What you do
- Where you do it
- With whom

I think that is true. To have a great career, you must choose work that gives you satisfaction, a working environment that is pleasing, and coworkers who make it easier for you to achieve your objectives.

To those three W's, I'd add a fourth: *when*. As in, *when* you work and *when* you don't. Being in charge of the hours you work and the vacations you take is an important element in the mix that makes up the perfect working lifestyle.

This is a book about business, about taking your business to the next level. But it is also a book about personal power and satisfaction, about changing the way you work so that you can become increasingly in charge of the four W's of career satisfaction and thus be able to say, "I have the greatest job in the world!"

### **World-Class Travel Paid for by My Businesses**

I love to travel, and my job as a consultant to the many businesses I'm involved in takes me all around the world on a regular basis. In the past year, I have spent a week in a 24-bedroom chateau in Normandy, and a week in a luxury hotel in Paris, and in Madrid, and in Rome. I enjoyed several memorable days in Rome, New York, Buenos Aires, and Dublin, not to mention the time I spent in our second home overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Nicaragua.

When I travel with my wife, I spend the bulk of my day having fun visiting parks and shops and

museums and going to concerts, dance performances, and the theater. When I travel by myself, I block out several hours every day to indulge myself in small museums and art galleries and take advantage of the health club and spa amenities offered by the hotels I stay in.

And because my business interests are international, travel is largely first-class and paid for by one of the companies I consult with.

My office is more a grown-up version of a boy's treehouse than it is a workplace, complete with a personal gym, jiu jitsu room, billiard table, movie screening room, and art studio. It is located 1.1 miles (an eight-minute jog) from my main home, which is in one of America's best cities on the Atlantic Ocean in South Florida.

So if you were to ask me "Where do you work?", my answer would be "In all the best places."

## **Being in Control of Your Time**

My working time used to be directed by other people and measured by a time clock.

At the Rockville Centre Car Wash back in 1962, we were penalized a half-hour's pay for each minute of tardiness. Later, as a schlepper at King Cullen's Warehouse, my high school friends and I worked whatever shift we were told to work, and we were happy to have the job. Later still, as an assistant

teacher during my college and Peace Corps days and as an employee of a publishing company in Washington, D.C., I was told when to arrive at work and when I could leave. These mandates, I soon learned, were official minimums. If I wanted to advance, I had to follow the unpublished requirements that were kept in my boss's brain – which were usually an hour earlier and two hours later than the official hours.

When I went into business for myself, I began with the happy illusion that I could work the hours I wanted. But I soon discovered the truth about entrepreneurship: that the freedom it gives you is usually the freedom to work twice as long and twice as hard as you ever did, even if you thought you were working too much for someone else.

Nowadays, though, I don't work that hard. In fact, most days I don't do any "work work" until about four o'clock in the afternoon, and then I quit at about five or five-thirty.

You know what I mean by "work work." It's the work that you would not do unless you were getting paid to do it.

For me, "work work" is answering e-mails. Why? Because that is where and how the people in all the businesses I work with get to "tell me" about any difficult problems they may be having. I learned, long ago, that if you refuse to help smart people solve their business problems, they solve them

perfectly well themselves. But since I do like to keep tabs on the sort of problems the businesses I am involved with might be experiencing at any point in time, I devote an hour a day to monitoring the progress they're making in overcoming their particular obstacles, and offering suggestions only when they really get stuck.\*

What I do during the rest of my day is pretty much up to me. Most mornings I spend writing – not because writing is what I have to do, but because I like to do it. I work out every day at noon. Sometimes I lunch with business colleagues – usually CEOs of businesses I have an interest in – and sometimes I lunch with friends. Once or twice a week, I'll have hour-long brainstorming sessions with creative people – again, not because I need to but because I like to. I spend 15 minutes with my personal assistant every day – and that's about it.

## **Doing What You Like to Do**

Except for that hour a day of e-mail drudgery, my time is entirely my own and entirely enjoyable. I take off early when I want to and come in late any time I wish. I have eliminated all the stress that used to characterize most of my workday.

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\* Here is a secret to keeping your e-mail to an hour a day: It is okay to make suggestions, but make it very clear that your suggestions are not mandates and that all decisions must be made by the people who are being paid to make decisions. If you follow the advice in this book, the decision-maker will be *you* only in the early stages of a new business or project.

The majority of my “workday” is spent doing things I love to do:

- Writing down my thoughts and experiences.
- Having lunch with successful people.
- Reading and learning.
- Working out and playing sports.

This is, as you can see, pretty much what I always hoped my retirement years would be like – except that I’m getting paid to spend my time like this now. If you can do exactly what you want, where and when you want to do it – and get paid well for it – that’s about all you can ask for.

Except for one more thing: I couldn’t tell you that I have *the greatest job in the world* if I didn’t also work only with people I want to work with.

### **Hanging Out with Great People**

In determining *where* you want to work, *when* you want to work, and *what* you want to do, no consideration is more important than *who* you choose to work with. That’s because if you fill your working life with really good people, the problems that usually hamper and plague a business at every stage of its growth will be easy to solve and will eventually seem to disappear.

Great people make all the difference.

I can't begin to tell you how many times in my career I struggled with an employee who seemed to have good potential but could never get the job done right ... and then replaced that employee with someone new who began doing everything really, really well.

### **Is a Successful Company like a Bus?**

One of the keys to making a company successful is hiring the best employees you can, the ones who are tenacious and self-motivated, and letting them set the direction of your business, allowing them to excel and adapt to change instead of forcing them toward arbitrary goals. In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins uses the metaphor of a bus trip to explain this principle. "If we get the right people on the bus, and the wrong people off the bus, then we'll figure out how to take it someplace great."

Many times I have been told by an ordinary employee that certain problems were impossible to fix ... only to find another employee who went ahead and fixed them so that they were never again troublesome.

That's the difference between an ordinary worker and a superstar.

Have you ever wondered why some restaurants that used to have great food and service suddenly take a dip and begin offering not-so-good food served by surly, shiftless waitstaff?

The difference is almost always the disappearance of a superstar manager.

Have you ever had a business that failed because your partner turned out to be unreliable, untrustworthy, or incompetent?

I have an interest in several good-sized, highly profitable businesses that operate without any help from me or my partners, because the individuals who are running them are so good at what they do. Once a month, for example, I have a two-hour meeting with DAS, who – because he’s a superstar – has created a growing business that is very profitable ... with only a minimum amount of input from me.

By surrounding myself with the right *whos* – lots of hardworking, problem-solving superstars like DAS – I’ve been able to master the *whens*, *wheres*, and *whats* of my business life.

I really do have the world’s best job and – by the way – I make a pretty good living at it.\*

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\* Since I made up my mind to surround myself with superstars and stop working hard, my income has been consistently in the top one-tenth of 1 percent of the U.S. I don’t need an active

## What to Expect from This Book

In this book – my first book that is strictly about business – I will tell you all the most important things I have learned about business.

Some of these things are common sense concepts that can be explained by threadbare axioms<sup>#</sup>, and some came to me as revolutionary ideas that will be new to you. All of them are equally important. All of them have been essential contributors to what I have, which is what this book can give you: *the greatest, easiest, most rewarding job in the world!*

Some of these concepts and ideas have been introduced in *Early to Rise* (ETR), the e-zine I accidentally provided the inspiration for in 2000 with a memo I wrote to a colleague about the importance of getting to work before your employees.<sup>♦</sup> A few of them have been partially treated in my past books: *Automatic Wealth*, *Automatic Wealth for Grads*, *Seven Years to Seven Figures*, and *Confessions of a Self-Made*

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income any more, but these superstars just keep handing me checks.

<sup>#</sup> As my friend Bob Irish told me, “Just because it is common sense doesn’t mean it’s common practice.”

<sup>♦</sup> Nowadays, I sometimes spend my mornings writing fiction from a little writing studio I have above the garage. It has a window overlooking the beach, which gives me an opportunity to watch my neighbors walking to and from there. Sometimes Roger, an art critic and fellow writer, waves to me. It’s the job of the superstar who runs ETR to get to work before the rest of the staff and motivate them to succeed.

*Multimillionaire.* This is the first time I've attempted to put them together in a systematic way, however. It's the first time I've tried to create a blueprint for what I've learned how to do:

- Start a business from scratch and make it profitable quickly – usually in less than two years
- Take a developed business that has stalled and get it moving again
- Keep a growing business growing as revenues climb from a million to tens of millions to hundreds of millions
- Get other people to do almost all the hard work for you so you are free to do only the fun stuff
- Position yourself as an indispensable business builder so you can enjoy a big share of the profits even if you are working only part-time
- Duplicate your winning strategy in several businesses so you never have to worry about “needing” any one of them
- Enjoy the very best job in the world

This is a book about starting and growing entrepreneurial businesses. By entrepreneurial businesses, I mean businesses that create their own products, do their own marketing, and determine their own destinies. This is not a book meant for professional practices, service businesses, or franchises – although the motivated owner of such an enterprise will find ideas here that can be very

helpful. Nor is this book meant to be helpful to larger businesses – and by that, I mean businesses larger than, say, \$500 million in revenues - although, again, a senior executive of such a business could apply some of the ideas in this book to growing a division of the company.

This is also a book about personal transformation. To become good at starting and growing businesses, and getting other people to run them for you, you have to develop certain skills. I will tell you exactly what those skills are and how you can get very good at them fast.

Among other things, you will learn:

- The four stages of entrepreneurial growth and the primary obstacles, challenges, and opportunities that each stage presents
- The five "magic wands" of business genius that any ambitious person can learn to wield
- Why selling is your first business priority and the one thing you should never stop doing
- How to become the top marketer for your business ... and why it matters
- The handful of numbers that are critical in every business (You'll find out what those numbers are for your business and how to streamline your management by getting everyone to focus on them.)

- How to generate “tipping-point” ideas on a regular basis
- When to cut your losses short and when to let your winners run
- Why direct marketing should be part of every growing business
- The front-end/back-end method of doubling profits easily
- Why having a Plan B is as important as Plan A, and when and how to create it
- The difference between pushers, thinkers, organizers, and sellers, and how to attract the ones you need for your business

You will also learn why taking action matters so much in business, and why one business strategy – *Ready, Fire, Aim* – may be the single most important way to do it.

You will discover ways to develop profitable new products out of old ones, how to design powerful marketing campaigns that will regularly outsell your competitors, how to devise and integrate innovative operational procedures that will reduce costs, hassles, and customer service complaints ...

And that’s just for starters.

# Chapter One

## Getting to the Next Level

Ever since I started writing about business, I've had the idea of leading a very special, very high-priced retreat for entrepreneurs.\*

My goal was not financial. By the time I became a business writer, I no longer needed money and could have easily come up with many easier ways to make the \$300,000 that such a retreat could generate.

What inspired me was an ego challenge: All around me, self-proclaimed business experts were charging \$1,000 to \$5,000 for seminars, and they were getting plenty of eager people to pay up. Most of these guys were one-trick ponies – zero-down real estate gurus, direct-marketing experts, or motivational speakers. Few of them had my depth

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\* I began writing about business in 2000, after a 30-year career (which is still going on) in which I was involved as either partner, consultant, or advisor in the successful start-up of several dozen multimillion-dollar businesses, including six or seven with revenues that exceeded \$10 million, three or four that exceeded the \$25 million mark, one that reached \$135 million before it was sold (which is when I retired for the first time), and one – an ongoing business – that hit \$270 million last year and is growing strongly.

or breadth of experience. If they could get away with charging \$5,000, I reasoned, I should be able to charge \$10,000.

So that's what I did. I spoke to MaryEllen Tribby, the superstar who runs EarlytoRise.com,<sup>#</sup> and she agreed to do it. Three months later, she had everything set up and 30 tickets sold.<sup>♦</sup> The only thing left was to come up with a seminar schedule that would justify an investment of four days and \$10,000 by each attendee.

“Pride comes before the fall.” That saying haunted me as I pondered the question: What would I do for those 30 people that would be worth so much of their time and money?

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<sup>#</sup> EarlytoRise.com is one of more than 10 businesses in which I have an active interest. Because it is the most recent business I've started advising, it gets the greatest amount of my time. But, as you may have guessed from reading the introduction to this book, that is a relatively modest amount – about five hours a week, on average. This is a book about how you can create and run multiple, multi-million-dollar businesses without working as hard as you are working now.

<sup>♦</sup> Marketing Tip: The easiest way to create profits in your business is to sell your best customers a higher-level version of something they have already bought. MaryEllen's marketers did that by sending out a special invitation to a limited number of ETR customers who had already spent \$2,000 on a three-day conference with various ETR business writers. Our new seminar was positioned as more (four days) and better (me only) and sold out in a matter of weeks.

It wasn't going to be easy. Although they had all achieved a great deal in their lives, each had a different sort of business. Some were beginning new businesses. Many were growing modest-sized companies. And some had well-established \$10 million to \$25 million enterprises.

To make matters more challenging, their businesses ranged from professional services to publishing to manufacturing ... even to restaurants! To make this retreat work for everyone in the time allotted, I had to come up with a format and an agenda that would identify their similarities as well as their differences.

I thought a lot about it for several days, but couldn't come up with an answer. I called in two of ETR's most powerful thinkers, senior writer Charlie Byrne and contributing business management expert Richard Schefren (both superstars in their domains), and asked them what they thought. The specific question I posed was:

*What is it that all entrepreneurs and/or business people – regardless of what kind of industry they are in – want for themselves and their companies?*

Charlie was the first to reply.

“It seems to me,” he said, “that novices want to know how to start-up businesses from scratch. They will want you to tell them about your involvement

in so many successful business and product launches.”

“And people who are already in business (like me),” Richard added, “want to know how they can take their businesses to the next level.”

Both answers sounded right. Exactly right.

“So that’s what we are going to do,” I said. “We’ll develop a program so that everybody who comes – beginners, intermediates, or even experienced entrepreneurs – will leave the seminar with a blueprint for getting to that next level.

### **The Four Stages of Business Development**

If you look at how businesses develop over time, either from your own experience (which I did) or by looking at industry statistics for entrepreneurial ventures, you will see that when it comes to entrepreneurial businesses, there are basically four stages of growth.

1. The first stage is starting out – taking your business from an idea to actively running and generating reasonable cash flow. For the purposes of simplicity, I delimited it by annual revenues: from zero to \$1 million.
2. The second stage is the fast-growth stage – taking your business from the \$1 million level (at which there is usually

little or no profit) to a level where it is making about \$1 million to \$2 million a year in profits. Expressed in revenue terms, I identified that stage as \$1 million to \$10 million.

3. The third stage is the adolescent stage – taking your business over the \$10 million threshold (which is difficult for most entrepreneurs) to a substantially solid business where profits can be in the \$2 million to \$5 million range. The revenue parameters of this stage are from \$10 million to \$50 million.
4. The fourth stage is the maturing stage – taking your business from \$50 million to \$100 million (I've been an integral part of this process twice) or \$200 million (which one of the companies I consult with did two years ago) or even \$300 million (which that same company expects to see this year).

The theory that Charlie, Richard, and I developed, and that I presented to attendees at the beginning of the retreat, was that every entrepreneurial business has these four stages, and that each stage has its own unique characteristics in the form of problems, challenges, and opportunities.

I liked that theory – the simplicity of it. But what, I wondered, were those problems, challenges, and opportunities?

I spent several weeks thinking about it and came up with lots of ideas. Some of those ideas I knew were good and true. Others were true in certain cases or for certain industries but not for others. I was looking for a *unifying theory* of business growth – the problems, challenges, and opportunities that are *common to every business*.

It was difficult because of some fundamental differences between certain sorts of businesses – professional firms, franchises, non-profits, and others. Another problem was that I have had no experience starting or growing large companies – companies larger than \$300 million – so I couldn't pretend to be able to be creating a theory that would be applicable to them.

But if I limited my scope to entrepreneurial businesses – businesses that create their own products, do their own marketing, and determine their own destinies – then it could work. I could come up with a list of problems, challenges, and opportunities that are common to all such businesses.\*

The first task was to characterize the stages of business development. I kept it simple by limiting the number of stages to four. In human development, there are four stages of growth: infancy, childhood, adolescence, and maturity.†

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\* Although this book is not specifically meant for professional practices, service businesses, non-profits or franchises, the

Thus, I labeled the four stages of business growth accordingly.

When it came time to identifying common problems, challenges, and opportunities, I also came to the conclusion that less is more. In fact, I thought it would be great if I could identify one and only one characteristic for each category – the most important problem, challenge, and opportunity at each stage of development.

To test my new theory, I asked Jason Holland, my research assistant, to assemble the annual revenue and profit figures for the last six companies I had a hand in starting. I wanted to see how fast each had grown every year, and how long it had taken them to reach certain revenue targets – \$1 million, \$5 million, \$10 million, and so on. Perhaps that would help me identify any common characteristics.

In fact, it did. What I discovered from looking at Jason's charts and remembering the individual

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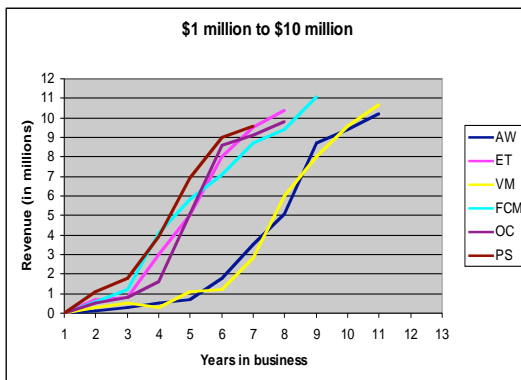
motivated owner of such an enterprise will find plenty of ideas here that can grow his business. Likewise, senior executives of large businesses will be able to use many of the secrets and skills presented in this book to grow their division and/or profit centers.

#There is another stage of life – senescence – but this is not a stage of business that I will discuss in this book. Some businesses do reach a stage where they are dying and have no chance of further growth. Many, however, can be revived simply by applying the growth-giving secrets covered in these pages.

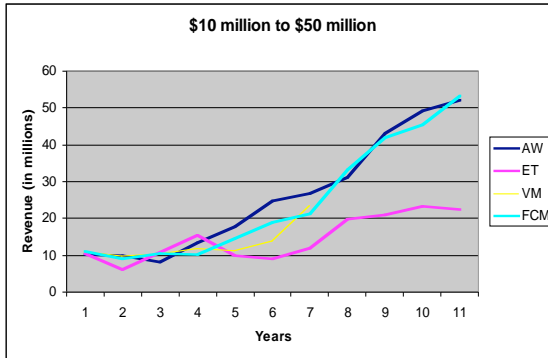
histories of those start-ups was that the problems, challenges, and opportunities that each faced were more or less the same at each level of growth.

The time it took to get from zero to \$1 million was different for each company, ranging from one year to five. Yet there was one very revealing common aspect to this initial stage of growth. Once the business figured out how to sell its product profitably, getting to \$1 million in revenues was done within a single year. The companies that took three and four and five years to hit \$1 million were all struggling with the same problem – making that first profitable sale. But the moment they figured it out, they were up and running.

### How Four Companies Grew from \$1 million to \$10 million



## How Two Companies Grew from \$10 million to \$50 million



I could also see from Jason's charts that once a business hit the \$1 million revenue mark, it took, on average, only five years to hit the next level of \$10 million in sales! That was pretty exciting. And when I thought about how each of these companies achieved that next level of growth, I could see that there were two factors that mattered most: speed and innovation.

There were four companies in that group of six with revenues in excess of \$10 million. Each of them experienced a year or two when problems escalated and profits dipped. To repair those problems and bring the company back to profitability, we had to implement systems and procedures that were lacking because of all the growth they had experienced.

Then there were the two companies in that group of six with revenues that surpassed \$50 million. How they – and every other company I’ve worked with that has hit or exceeded \$100 million – got bigger was surprisingly easy to answer.

I was excited about what we had discovered. I felt like we had come up with a unifying theory of entrepreneurial business growth. We tightened up the charts and presented them on the first night of our retreat.

Showing the graphic evidence of these growth stages evoked a pretty strong reaction from our attendees.

“I definitely can relate to your theory,” one told me. “I have been stuck at the \$1 million level for five years now, and can’t seem to break out of it.”

Another said, “My business is old and profitable. It did over \$20 million last year, and I don’t really need more money. But I would like to see it grow to \$100 million in the next five or 10 years – not for me but to have something big enough to distribute to my 10 grandchildren.”

Over the next four days, we made numerous references to this *unifying theory* – that at each of the four stages of entrepreneurial growth, you will face certain distinct problems, challenges, and opportunities, and that these problems, challenges,

and opportunities depend less on what business you are in than on the size of your business.

Other issues matter – but if you know what to expect at each stage of the game and prepare yourself for those common problems, challenges, and opportunities, it will be much easier to reach the next level.

### **Problems, Challenges, and Opportunities**

I have made some improvements in my unifying theory since the retreat. Here then is my updated idea about the four stages of entrepreneurial growth and the most important problem, challenge, and opportunity that presents itself at each stage:

#### **Stage One. Infancy: Zero to \$1 million in revenue**

Main Problem: You don't really know what you are doing.

Main Challenge: Making the first profitable sale.\*

Main Opportunity: Achieving a minimum critical mass of customers.

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\* By profitable, here, I mean cost-effective. The business itself will not be profitable at this point, but the cost of the sale should be such that, once you reach a critical mass of customers and generate “back-end” revenue, you can be profitable.

## **Stage Two. Childhood: \$1 million to \$10 million in revenue**

Main Problem: You are breaking even or losing money.

Main Challenge: Creating many additional, profitable products quickly.

Main Opportunity: To increase cash flow and become profitable.

## **Stage Three. Adolescence: \$10 million to \$50 million in revenue**

Main Problem: Your systems are strained, and customers are noticing.

Main Challenge: Turning the chaos into order.

Main Opportunity: Learning how to establish useful protocols and manage processes and procedures.

## **Stage Four. Adulthood: \$50 to \$100 million in revenue and beyond**

Main Problem: Sales slow down and may even stall.

Main Challenge: Becoming entrepreneurial again.

Main Opportunity: Getting the business to run itself.

Of the 30 people who attended my retreat, about six were just starting out (although several of them had

completed successful careers and were beginning anew). Most were in one of the early stages of growth, and three were already closing in on \$25 million in revenues.

### **What Should You Want for Your Business?**

Yet, the retreat attendees all wanted the same thing: *to get to the next level.*

And guess what? At the end of our experience together, all of them said they knew exactly what they needed to do to achieve their individual goals.\*

I was enormously gratified by their comments, hugely proud of their transformations, and immensely excited about the ideas I had gotten from them. About a third of the group said they had “gotten their money’s worth” from the retreat “after the second day.” The rest, on the final afternoon, cited specific actions they were going to take (or, in some cases, had already taken) to achieve their goals. In all, the experience was worth a great deal more than \$10,000 to each and every one of them.

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\* I don’t want to take credit for providing all the ideas that these 30 entrepreneurs took away from the retreat. Many, if not most, of them came from the entrepreneurs themselves. The smartest thing we did in organizing the retreat was to eschew lecturing for roundtable discussions. By bringing in the questions, comments, and suggestions of 30 bright and successful people, a great deal of the hard work was done for me.

In the chapters that follow, you will have access to all of the ideas we talked about at that retreat\*, and many more ideas that we didn't have time to discuss during our four days of brainstorming. If you read this book actively and positively (thinking hard about how these ideas could work for you and your business, and not discarding any of them because you might have heard them before or because they just don't seem, at first glance, to be relevant to your business), you will be able to:

- Identify where your business is now and what specific problems, challenges, and opportunities lie ahead of it
- Determine a path to get your business to the next level of sales, and then chart the next path to reach the next level
- Continue to grow your business into the millions and tens of millions and hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue
- Be in charge of all this growth and profit from it
- Become a primary beneficiary of multiple multimillion-dollar businesses
- Reduce the time you spend “working”
- Surround yourself with helpful, work-loving people

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\* It would be unfair to tell you the specific business-building plans that the attendees shared that day, but I will tell you all the principles, strategies, and concepts that led them to their plans.

- Swap the job you have now for the very best job in the world!

In the following pages, I am going to give you every concept, strategy, technique, and skill you need to make this transformation. What you have to give is simply your good faith and time. Good faith and time are what every one of the 30 businesspeople gave when they came to my retreat, and those investments were enough to create for each of them a very practical plan of action that will take their businesses to the next level. It worked for them. It should work for you.

Actually, they gave something else that you haven't given. \$10,000. When you put these recommendations into action and are happy with the results, I hope you'll write to me and tell me all about it. Including a check for \$10,000 will be optional.