

# Healthy HUSTLE

**The New  
Blueprint  
to Thrive  
in Business  
and Life**

**BY NICKY MIKLÓS  
WITH VANESSA MEDLING**

# PRAISE FOR HEALTHY HUSTLE

*'Healthy Hustle* is a game-changer for business owners and leaders. Nicky and Vanessa have masterfully combined practical strategies with insightful stories to guide you from chaos to clarity. Their approach to smart growth and peak performance is both refreshing and actionable. This book will help you lead your business to new heights while reclaiming your time and energy.'

– **Donna McGeorge**, Best-selling author and global authority on productivity

*'Healthy Hustle* is groundbreaking for business leaders and entrepreneurs alike. It provides practical, actionable steps to achieve peak performance in business while maintaining balance and wellbeing. The book is packed with insights on leadership, team dynamics, and productivity that are both inspiring and easy to implement. Whether you're looking to transform your business, optimise your team's performance, or simply find a better work-life balance, this book is an invaluable resource.

This dynamic duo have distilled years of experience and wisdom into a comprehensive guide that teaches how to shift from the traditional, exhausting hustle to a more sustainable, healthy approach to business growth.'

– **James Bartrop**, Founder and Managing Director ShadowSafe

'Over the past decade, I've seen Nicky and Ness's strategies develop into a powerful toolkit yielding exceptional results. *Healthy Hustle* offers a clear, prioritised roadmap to guide leaders from chaos to clarity. Their innovative, actionable methods for smart growth and peak performance are transformative. I've applied these strategies, including in digital transformation, with great success. This book is essential for business owners and senior leaders seeking to optimise time and preserve energy for ALL the moments that matter.'

– **Gemma Visentin**, Cross Functional Corporate Expert & Leader

'*Healthy Hustle* by Nicky and Ness is a game-changer for business leaders who have flirted with burnout while chasing success. As someone who has nearly hit the wall multiple times, this book is a revelation. It debunks the myth that long hours are the key to achievement and instead offers a practical blueprint for working smarter, not harder. If you're a business leader who wants to build a thriving team without sacrificing your wellbeing, this is a must-read guide.'

– **Leah Mether**, Communication speaker and trainer.  
Global authority and author of the acclaimed books *Steer Through the Storm* and *Soft is the New Hard*

'Nicky and Ness have the antidote to grind culture that'll shake you out of the hustle into a truly sustainable way of working. This book blends humour and wisdom with a spot of cheekiness that's just so them. You'll laugh, you'll think, and—most importantly—you'll be inspired to act. Backed by evidence that'll convince even the most resistant among us, this page-turner leaves you no place to hide. Prepare to unlearn old habits, relearn new ones, and develop a healthier approach to business and life.'

– **Karen Tisdell**, LinkedIn Profile Writer, Trainer and Speaker

'*Healthy Hustle* is a refreshing and insightful guide for business owners and corporate leaders who have already achieved a level of success or for those starting out and looking for tools to guide them on their journey.

One of the standout features of *Healthy Hustle* is its focus on working smarter rather than harder. This is a book that recognises the pitfalls of the relentless hustle culture, offering instead a balanced approach that prioritises efficiency and effectiveness.

Its practical tools and strategies are grounded in real-world application, making it a valuable resource for anyone looking to sustain long-term success without sacrificing their quality of life.'

– **Joe Visentin**, National Sales Manager at Canon Australia

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**NICKY**  
*Miklós*

## **Healthy Hustle**

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*To the bold business owners and  
visionary leaders who are the true  
change agents.*

*This book is for those who are driven  
by passion, committed to success,  
and determined to achieve it without  
sacrificing their wellbeing.*

*You are the pioneers who are not only  
building impactful businesses but are  
also redefining what it means to lead  
with purpose, balance, and heart.*

*Our hope is that this book will play a  
small part in changing the business  
landscape for a better, more sustainable  
way of thriving in both business and life.*

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ABOUT

# The Authors

Nicky and Ness are seasoned business leaders and coaches, dedicated to transforming the way business owners approach growth and success. With over fifty years of combined experience in leadership, sales, and coaching, they bring a wealth of knowledge and a unique perspective to the table. Both have successfully run coaching businesses since 2015, and together they co-founded Business Together, a venture that helped business owners break free from the relentless cycle of busyness and build businesses by design.

Nicky is a TEDx speaker whose journey is one of resilience and reinvention. After experiencing burnout in 2012, she redefined her approach to success, shifting from relentless hustle to sustainable growth. This pivotal moment fuelled her passion for helping others achieve balance and fulfilment in both business and life. Her mission is to empower business owners to step back from chaos, unlock their potential, and create thriving businesses that can stand strong, even in their absence. Today, Nicky continues this work by partnering with businesses to activate sustainable sales growth, build strong leadership capability, and help high performers find their own sweet spot of healthy hustle through speaking engagements, facilitating training programs, and coaching.

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Ness brings a deep understanding of human behaviour and a genuine care for helping others reach their full potential. After a successful career in executive leadership, she transitioned into coaching, driven by a passion for helping others create success on their own terms. She is particularly passionate about financial self-reliance, especially for women. She is an experienced coach, mentor, and facilitator, known for her engaging and inspirational style that leaves a lasting impact.

If you're into the formal stuff, you might like to know that both Nicky and Ness are accredited in eDISC Behavioral Profiling, are Meta Dynamics Level 3 Practitioners of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and are qualified Professional Coaches and Facilitators.

When they're not busy transforming businesses, you'll find Nicky enjoying walks with her wife, Jules, and their three dogs, or getting lost in a DanceFiit class. Ness loves spending quality time with her grown-up kids, Cam and Bec, her partner Wayne, and spoiling her Spoodle, Charlie.

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## **A Note from the Authors**

While much of the writing and personal stories in *Healthy Hustle* come from Nicky's pen, the wisdom, insights, and practical tools shared throughout these pages are a true collaboration.

This book is born from the combined experience, intellectual property, and client work that both Nicky and Ness have passionately cultivated over the years.

Every strategy and piece of advice you'll find here is a reflection of their shared journey in transforming businesses and lives. Together, they've distilled decades of knowledge into a blueprint for success that blends the best of their individual and collective expertise.

# FOREWORD

# By Janine Garner

You've heard the drill a thousand times: "In the event of an emergency, an oxygen mask will drop from the compartment above. Fit your mask on first before assisting others." It's an instruction we all know by heart, but how many of us actually heed that advice in the chaos of our daily lives? I'm willing to bet that most of us, when faced with real-life emergencies – or even just the relentless demands of our daily grind – would instinctively reach to help someone else first.

This instinct to prioritise others over ourselves isn't just ingrained in our biology – it's been reinforced by society, culture, and even the endless stream of advertising we're bombarded with. We're taught that self-care is selfish, that the only way to reach the top is to keep pushing, keep going, keep sacrificing. But here's the truth: Busy isn't leadership. Burnout isn't success.

That's why *Healthy Hustle* is such a crucial read for anyone who's ever felt the weight of the world on their shoulders. This book is

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not just a collection of strategies for growing your business; it's a blueprint for thriving in every aspect of your life. It challenges the outdated notion that success requires relentless sacrifice and introduces a new paradigm where smart growth, peak performance, and time freedom coexist in harmony. This is not just theory – it's a proven approach, backed by real-life examples of individuals who have not only grown their businesses but have also reclaimed their lives in the process.

Take the story of Michelle and Douglas, who dared to ask themselves a question most business owners wouldn't even entertain: What if we stepped away from our business for a year? Could it survive without us? Their journey, from doubting the possibility to empowering their team and ultimately thriving during their time abroad, is a powerful testament to the ideas laid out in this book. They didn't just grow their business; they grew as individuals and as a family, discovering that true success isn't about how much you do, but about how well you align your business with your life.

*Healthy Hustle* is packed with practical tools, actionable strategies, and real-world stories like Michelle and Douglas's. It's about understanding the difference between chaos that drives innovation and growth, and chaos that leads to burnout and decline. With the insights in this book, you'll learn how to create an environment where you and your team can thrive without being tethered to the daily grind.

The old-school hustle – where we push ourselves to the brink – doesn't have to be the only path to success. In fact, it's often the most dangerous one. I used to believe the same stories you might be telling yourself now – stories that justified the constant

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doing, the never-ending to-do lists, and the relentless pursuit of more. But those stories were just excuses, masking the real problem: I wasn't prioritising my own well-being.

Putting your own needs first isn't selfish – it's smart. It's about managing your energy, your resources, and your stamina so that you can show up fully for yourself, your team, your clients, and your family. If you're constantly running on empty, how will you ever be able to give your best to anyone else?

*Healthy Hustle* will guide you through the process of redefining success on your terms. It offers a road map for integrating smart business growth with personal wellbeing, helping you move from survival mode to a place where you can truly thrive. Whether it's through the smart growth principles that bring clarity out of chaos, the peak performance strategies that empower your team, or the time freedom models that give you back control of your life, this book provides the tools you need to build a business that doesn't just survive – but that prospers without consuming you.

But let's be clear – reading this book alone won't change your life. It's the action you take after turning the final page that will make all the difference. The concepts and tools you'll find here are your roadmap, but the journey is yours to take. Will you continue on the same path, overwhelmed and overworked? Or will you be courageous enough to do something different, to embrace the idea that you can step back, trust your team, and still see your business flourish?

The choice is yours. This book is your guide to not just surviving in business, but truly thriving in all aspects of life. As you embark

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on this journey, remember that the ultimate goal is not just to build a successful business, but to create a life that you love living every day. That is the essence of healthy hustle.

**Janine Garner – Best-selling author,  
International Speaker and Business Owner**

# Introduction

In 2019, James B reached out looking for a different way, a better way. His business was at a growth set point. He'd grown in terms of revenue and clients, and he was feeling the pressure. It was affecting his ability to be present with his wife and young kids. He couldn't disconnect from work when he was with his family and would always have his phone within arm's reach. He was in constant demand, feeling the need to answer calls at the dinner table, always listening out for the next thing that was around the corner seeking his undivided attention.

Fast forward to today, James B recently shared with us that his business has experienced an average 98% increase in revenue year-on-year over the five years we've been working together, *with* a profit increase. Now, that's some serious growth in terms of healthy revenue and profit (particularly considering he was already an established business), and we know many business owners who wouldn't shy away from those kinds of numbers. But the revenue and profit increase weren't the most exciting part of James B's results. *They* weren't the thing we were celebrating.

There's a deeper and more meaningful aspect to why this was such a huge win. James B experienced this level of growth **and** no longer feels tethered to his business. He can leave work at work, empowering his team to step in and step up when needed. This gives him more time to go karting with his son

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on the weekends, pick his daughters up from school and have breakfast with his wife before work.

Now, it's likely you'll have one of three responses at this point.

1. Gasp! What does that feel like ... I want that!
2. Yeah right, there's no way that could be me. My business is different ... [insert all the reasons why it could be someone else and not you here].
3. What's the big deal? There's nothing wrong with being devoutly attached to my business and missing out on life events.

Whichever response you have, we want to remind you that achieving your next level of success is never just about external growth. It was evident from the get-go that a critical turning point for James B was the work he did on his beliefs and mindset, unlearning his old ways of working, and redefining a vision of success for himself and his family. So, when we think about thriving in business and life in the truest form, we think of James B and the positive impact these shifts in perspective and ways of working had on his business, his family, his team and his clients. You see, it's not only about the revenue results, but also about *how* you get there.

And we wonder if the fact that you've picked up this book means you see some of yourself in James B's story. Maybe you're in a similar position to where James B was?

The numbers are good, clients and sales are on the rise. Your team is growing and yet somehow you still don't feel like you're thriving. In fact, you're too busy to even think about what thriving in business could look like because you're just trying to hold it all together. You're so busy keeping all the plates spinning and trying to get off Juggle Street, yet nothing seems to work. You also don't want to risk the success of your business and how far you've come by slowing down.

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**Sometimes we need to slow down before we can speed up and that's why this book matters. If you want results like James B, read on.**

We've written this book specifically for business owners and leaders with teams so that you can keep winning in business *and* live your best life – no more winning at all costs. You'll benefit from the combined insights and expertise of not just one but two seasoned business and leadership coaches. That's double the mix of perspectives and experience to build on your own business acumen. Having each owned successful coaching businesses, we've honed our expertise in leadership, business and sales across a variety of industries and business sizes.

What we know to be true is that there are three main reasons good folks like yourself start their businesses:\*

1. To have more time with family and get free from the shackles of a day job (and a boss) ... while making good money.
2. To step into your zone of genius because you're damn good at what you do and can do it better than anyone else out there.
3. To bring a dream to life, you have a passion that became a driving force.

We'd love to know, which was it for you? Maybe it was a combination of two of these reasons? Maybe it was all the above?

If we fast forward to today, or to five, ten, twenty years down the track, the reality is often far from your dream of why you started your business in the first place. If you're like the many other business owners we work with, instead of feeling free, you feel shackled to the business. Instead of being in your genius zone, you're feeling overworked and stretched in what feels like a million different directions. And instead of spending more

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\* Note for Leaders: While you might not relate directly to the reasons someone started a business, there may be similar motivations behind why you took on a particular role or progressed in your career.

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time with your family, you're spending less than when you had a day job.

The fire in your belly and the passion has diminished, and business feels chaotic. You're working beyond capacity; the hours are long, the juggle is real and sometimes you find yourself asking, is it all even worth it, because you're pulled into the whirlwind of day-to-day craziness, delivering for clients, creating an amazing environment for your team, keeping the business afloat, all while dealing with the many other aspects of life that are thrown at you. With all this going on, it's no wonder there's a growing chasm between *why* you went into business and the *current reality* of your day-to-day life in business.

But you know how this story goes. You get up, and you keep hustling ... harder.

There's no doubt about it, you've reached a level of success that many would envy. You unequivocally and totally rock! You've beat the statistics, the naysayers and the tumultuous times in business. And we are in awe of your tenacity, determination and resilience. You had to hustle hard, and it worked. The business grew, the team grew, and you found yourself celebrating successes along the way.

But at what cost?

The hardcore (old-school) 'hustle for success' formula has created a conundrum that you're most likely dealing with today. And it's this: You've been doing things this way for so long you have plenty of evidence to show that your business will grow *if* you hustle, stay in the minutiae and do it all yourself. This has now become a subconscious belief that's been created and proven time and time again with every day, month, year you've been in business. This belief of 'hustle hard at all costs', 'do it all', 'don't stop' way of working has become a driving force (and arguably the price of) your success. Do you know how to do business any other way?

**Here's our first truth bomb: What got you to this level of success is not going to be what gets you to your next frontier of growth.**

We wrote this book to help you unlearn, and relearn, healthy hustle strategies for where you are right now. To show you there is a better way so that you can get control back of your destiny and no longer let your business control your life. To start a conversation about the limits and boundaries of hustle. So, what is healthy hustle?

In our world, healthy hustle is ...

- Being driven, tenacious, determined but **not** at all costs.
- Prioritising life, just as much as business.
- Releasing the weight of expectation of how we *should* do business.
- Winning in both business, and life.

Ultimately healthy hustle is the balance of knowing when to push and when to pull back. It's success without health issues from stress. It's achieving goals without sacrificing time doing things we enjoy.

It's time for you to redefine success in a way that fits you and your lifestyle. We're not here to tell you what healthy hustle is for you. You need to decide that. We're here to inspire and challenge your thinking around what it could be for you. Our definition could be different to yours. And that's okay!

You might bristle at the word hustle. You might be thinking 'why hustle at all?'

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The answer is because we need the hustle. Just like we need stress, positive stress, to thrive (more about this further along in the book). The upside of hustle is that it can create momentum, action, energy, focus and drive. The problem is, we've taken it too far.

There's no one size fits all in business. If the years post-Covid have taught us anything, it's this. It might seem like the easy option to continue as is, not challenge the status quo. But – as you'll learn through understanding the phases of smart business growth and the other insights and frameworks in this book – if you don't do anything, your business will either plateau or be at risk of decline.

The **7 Business Truths** we must embrace for healthy hustle:

1. You can have a super successful business while still having a life.
2. You've been sold a lie that the only way to keep succeeding is to 'work harder'.
3. Burnout and being busy are not badges of honour.
4. Business can grow without subscribing to the push, stress, hard hustle culture.
5. It's up to you to break the rules of business that don't work for you.
6. You don't have to be tethered to your business to thrive in business.
7. You can create a thriving business on your own terms.

The road map to embrace smart business growth, leverage leadership for peak performance and get back time freedom are laid out in the following pages. We're giving you the blueprint and real-life reference points as your road map.

**Here's our promise:** We've got you! If we need to believe in these truths for you until you believe them for yourself, then that's what we'll do. Our hope is that by the time you've finished reading this book, you'll see all these 7 Business Truths as your reality.

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**Here's our ask:** Be open-minded and give it a go. Park any 'why it won't work' reasons that come up and instead try to focus on the question 'how could this work?'. This is about expanding your thinking and exploring what could be.

We've had a lot of tough conversations with business owners over the years and have identified the patterns that make a successful, sustainable business and those that cause businesses to fail, or business owners to burnout. Which, of course, has a ripple effect on all those around them. We've both worked in leadership roles in corporate, big business environments and have also learnt the agile ways of working in small businesses. The powerful combination of these two perspectives is weaved throughout this book, and all the work we do.

We're obsessed with contributing to a new era of business and leadership that values humanness, champions smart growth, and cultivates a culture of healthy hustle to redefine success and magnify our impact on people.

### **This book is broken into three parts:**

1. How Did We Get Here?
2. How Do We Get There?
3. The Road Ahead.

Woven throughout are real-life stories of people in our community who we've worked with either as clients or interviewed on our podcast. They're creating phenomenal change in their businesses so that they, their teams *and* their businesses can thrive well into the future.

At the back of the book, you'll see we've created a Choose Your Own Adventure Map of the exercises and key frameworks we take you through. There's also dedicated space for you to make

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notes so that you can create your own cheat sheet to come back to whenever you need.

We've also designed the book for you to be able to open to any chapter and find something that can immediately be applied to your business. If you have a particular area you want to start working on, follow the guide below.

- **Business planning**  
Chapter 3. Smart Growth: Chaos to Clarity
- **Sales**  
Bonus section of Chapter 3: Let's Talk Sales
- **Team development**  
Chapter 4. Peak Performance: Stepping Off Juggle Street
- **Time management**  
Chapter 5. Time Freedom: Your Path to Time Freedom
- **Identifying what phase of smart growth you're in**  
Chapter 6. Your Smart Growth Blueprint

Or, of course, you can read along chapter by chapter.

If you were a kid in the 1980s, you might remember the *Choose Your Own Adventure* books. They were filled to the brim with different journeys and escapades, roadblocks and obstacles to overcome, as well as triumphs and celebrations of milestones. As the reader, you were the star of the show. You could be a daring spy, a fearless mountain climber, or a brilliant detective. There were unexpected twists, trick endings and you couldn't backtrack to the exact same spot where you started if you regretted your decision. The stakes were high, and they certainly felt real. Just like in business.

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At various points in the *Choose Your Own Adventure* books, you could choose where to go next. There could be an option taking you down the seemingly treacherous yet feasibly lucrative path, it feels a bit risky and daring but it could be worth the risk. Or there could be an option that feels a little safer, more familiar and predictable, but you never really knew if it was the safe option until you got to the end.

We want you to think of this book as your own 'Choose Your Own Adventure' story. Right now, in this very moment, you have three options laid out in front of you. Which will you choose?

**Path 1. Keep going as you are.** Maintaining your existing strategies and methods as challenges pop up. Whilst you know there could be a better way, you're not ready to veer away from the status quo (or current state of 'hustle').

**Path 2. Bury your head in the sand.** Avoiding challenges and refusing to acknowledge issues hoping they'll resolve themselves. Ignoring problems and wishing they'll go away.

**Path 3. Be courageous enough to do things differently.** Trying new approaches, expanding comfort zones and challenging the norm. Finding new ways to reach new heights in business.

Each decision you make as a leader takes you down a different path with its own set of challenges and potential rewards. Some paths feel scarier than others. Some feel safer but it could be a trick to keep you in your comfort zone. And staying in your comfort zone will eventually become uncomfortable. As one of our favourite mentors, Joe Pane says, "everything in the universe without exception is expanding or shrinking, breathing out or breathing in, green and growing or ripe and rotting." So, which will it be?

This is an invitation for you to join us if you want to take Path 3.

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# PART ONE.

## How Did We Get Here?

It's time to define what hustle and healthy hustle is (and isn't) in your world view, and how it's affecting both you personally and your business results. What are the negative side effects to the old-school hustle that's become such a prevalent part of society and, equally, how could healthy hustle serve you better?

The sad truth is that the longer you're in business, the more the stats are against you. When you know what the common reasons for business failure are, you can arm yourself and be ready for the battle. Or hopefully avoid the battle all together. There are things in your business you might be ignoring, and they could be the things that are going to get you to smart growth. What are they and why do they matter?

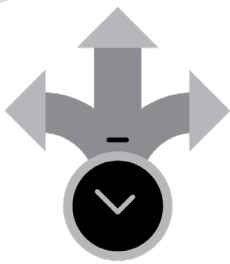
## HEALTHY HUSTLE

There's a typical pain point in businesses on the trajectory of time and results that becomes a potential growth point to move the business forward. You can either grow or stay the same, wish and hope for growth, or go into denial and risk decline.

Being aware of this pain point gives you the opportunity to break the cycles that are unhelpful for your business and your team. When we know better, we do better. And honestly, it's our responsibility to step up and grow smartly, not through hard relentless hustle. Because, as Marshall Goldsmith so famously said, "What got you here won't get you there" ... which in this context is your next horizon. Your next evolution.

Of course, you can always keep going as is, and ignore that niggling feeling that there could be a better, different way of working and growing your business (that doesn't involve you being so relied on in the day-to-day operations). But we hope you choose to get curious and explore our ideas about leaning into a healthier hustle, get inspired by the stories of business leaders who have been where you are now, and have a go at using the practical tools and exercises shared in the following pages.





# **CHAPTER ONE.**

## **The Hours are Long: The Juggle is Real**

## LET'S TALK ABOUT THE HUSTLE

For the last decade, we've been slightly obsessed with this idea of 'hustle'. What it means, the impact on us as humans and the flow-on effect to our businesses, families and lives.

Even in the early days of business, we absolutely loved bringing the conversation of understanding hustle to the table. Always curious to find out what 'hustle' meant to the high-performing business leaders we worked with, and often asking the question, "What does hustle mean to you?" We wonder, how would you answer that question today?

We found it fascinating that very rarely did two people answer in the exact same way. Some people said hustle is conning people or ripping people off. Others said they think of it as hard work, tenacity and kicking goals. We think the strangest answer was 'a dance' (if you don't know it, apparently it was all the rage in the 1970s). And there's also a movie out there called *The Hustler* ... go figure.

If we look up the *Oxford Dictionary* definition of hustle, we'll find:

Push roughly; jostle.

Obtain illicitly or by forceful action.

A state of great activity.

A fraud or swindle.

Or if we check out the *Urban Dictionary*:\*

To strive headstrong and voraciously towards a goal.

To seek out and acquire sums of money, preferably large sums, often by unscrupulous means.

So, whose meaning, and definition of hustle is correct?

Well, yours is. Ours is. Theirs is. We're all right!

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\* Urban Dictionary is a crowdsourced English-language online dictionary for slang words and phrases.

## THE HOURS ARE LONG: THE JUGGLE IS REAL

Because nothing has meaning except the meaning we give it. And the meaning we give words happens subconsciously based on our values and our experiences. Experiences like doing the dance in the 1970s, watching a movie called *The Hustler*, or being ripped off and pushed into buying something and feeling like we've been swindled. All these are experiences and events that shape what we believe to be true. They attach the meaning that we apply to words.

### **Perception is reality *regardless* of what the dictionary definition is.**

Personally, for me (Nicky), my relationship with hustle has changed over time. In the early days I hustled my way to success in my corporate and business career. Having grown up in housing commission, I had a real drive to succeed, to make money and have as many experiences as I could along the way. I did my best to fit as much as possible into this wild ride of life. I remember a mentor when I was in my early twenties warning me about this concept of burning the candle at both ends. Hah! But I had something to prove and apparently I was invincible.

So, as I got older, I continued to work my butt off, putting in the long hours, not stopping and trying to do it all. I took pride in being the last one in the office. I was all things to all people and eventually it led me to burnout where I felt trapped with a body, mind and energy that were unrecognisable to me. Yet, even after burnout (not a pleasant experience to say the least), I *still* found myself deeply wound up in the cycle of hustle, push culture.

The result?

Career progression, a successful and growing business, revenue and profit I'd once only dreamed of. This is the side of success people could see. What they didn't see was the panic attack that landed me in ER, the pneumonia from pushing too hard when I was sick, finding myself lying Elizabeth Gilbert-style (oh yes, *Eat*

## HEALTHY HUSTLE

*Pray Love*) on the floor completely overwhelmed. And these are things that happened *after* my first experience of burnout.

After embracing (and, let's be honest, celebrating) the hardcore nature of old-school hustle till I drop, it got me thinking: There must be a better way! This can't be what success looks like. Feeling exhausted, running to the finish line at the end of each year or the end of the week ... or even the end of each day.

Now there's nothing wrong with being driven and an action-taker – in fact it's needed. And we don't know about you, but it's how we're wired and we don't want that to change. However, when it comes to hustle culture, there's a winning-at-all-costs mentality that seems to take over. There's a lie we're being told that we need to be constantly 'on' and if we're not, we're wasting time. That to stop, means being lazy or inefficient. Think about it, even elite athletes need time to pause and recover.

Imagine you're an elite athlete and your area of sport is business (or leadership). How are you taking care of your body, your mind and your energy to make sure you keep performing at your best?

**The key is to find the sweet spot between taking enough action and go-getting to move forward at a steady pace, but not so much that it becomes all-consuming and sucks the life out of you. This sweet spot is *healthy hustle*.**

## STUCK IN THE WHIRLWIND

In business we want to be like the best athlete, to go from strength to strength. We're in this business where it's a game of inches. Incremental growth and the 1% can sometimes be more powerful than 100%. Because it's not *just* about getting better and better or doing more and more each day. It's also about enjoying the process – that can be fulfilling on its own.

You've heard the saying, it's not about the destination, it's about the journey. Well, we want to question, why can't it be both?

Why can't it be about the destination *and* the journey!

Right now, businesses are stuck in a whirlwind. They are in chaos, with many business owners and leaders feeling like they are living every day on Juggle Street. We're living in a culture that has us addicted to and always wanting 'more'. This feeling of chaos is presenting itself in so many ways with many people already at risk of burnout. According to a Deloitte survey in 2018, 77% of employees reported experiencing burnout in their current job. As a collective, we're exhausted. Mental health issues are going through the roof. Kids are struggling. Parents are struggling. The same Deloitte survey stated 91% of people say having an unmanageable amount of stress or frustration negatively impacts the quality of their work. Team engagement is dropping, staff turnover is at an all-time high. According to Gallup, burned-out employees are 2.6 times as likely to be actively seeking a different job.

There's panic about the future of work and a scramble to find the next big thing. All you need to do is turn on any media channel and you can feel the chaos. We've gotten ourselves so tangled in the web of fast-paced action and too many options (seriously – does anyone else have decision fatigue about what to watch on all the streaming channels or is it just us?) that we can't see the forest for the trees. We're stuck in a busy trap.

## HEALTHY HUSTLE

To overcome the chaos, maybe you've invested in growing your team, hoping it would give you capacity to get more stuff done but instead you still feel like there's even more balls in the air. Many hands make light work, don't they? Isn't that what they say? What they don't tell you is that along with those many hands come many different opinions, mindsets, ways of thinking, ways of doing. And so, a part of the journey to move from Juggle Street to peak performance is not always simple because people are complex. Yet the way we lead them doesn't have to be.

And let's not forget the sales pressure – while your lead generation might be on fire, your internal sales systems could be letting you down. Sales growth in the business might still be solely reliant on you, and you know you need to empower and train your team, but you don't have the time to even think about transferring the knowledge from your head into a development plan or coaching for your team members.

Ultimately, what we want is for you to be able to leverage smart growth, have your team performing optimally and for everyone in the business to enjoy time freedom. There's a calling for a gentler way, a slower pace, the option of choice. We can see it in the slow living movement that came about from a yearning to live a more balanced, present and meaningful life. The slow living movement is a lifestyle that encourages a slower approach to aspects of everyday life, including completing tasks at a leisurely pace.

And yet, we get it, you don't want to risk the success you've already achieved by slowing down. Trust us, we know what it's like to be at the point of wanting a better way, and at the same time concerned about risking it all by stopping or doing things differently. Because there are still goals to chase down and there's a fun aspect to the fast side of living that maybe you're not ready to give up just yet (or ever).

## THE STATS ARE AGAINST US

We're sure you've heard stats for early days in business (in case you haven't, 60% of businesses will fail within the first three years), but did you know the longer you're in business, the more the stats are against you?

Research shows that 80% of businesses will fail within twenty years. Our jaws dropped when we first heard this stat. There's so much focus on getting through the early years of business but what about the established businesses that have been around the block a few times. They've got the war wounds to show from turbulent times. The trophies in the poolroom from their glory days. And apparently, they're not out of the woods despite the many years of doing their thing!

As we delve a little deeper, we uncover three main reasons (outside of poor cashflow management) that businesses fail:

- Lack of staff training.
- No strategy.
- Business owners getting stuck in day-to-day operations.

Do any of these reasons surprise you? What we find most heartening is that every single one is within your control. With the right blueprint and knowing where to focus your and your team's attention, you can futureproof your business and steer clear of becoming yet another statistic.

Here's our caution sign: If you don't address these potential pitfalls, you could wind up being another statistic. You already could be on the path to resenting your business, hitting the burnout wall and deciding to walk away from your business entirely. Now's the time to pump the brakes and pause.

Let's take a moment.



## ACTION WITH PURPOSE

Rate yourself from 1 to 10 in each of these areas, where 1 means there's nothing in place in this area and 10 means not only is it happening, but it's also happening consistently.

Be brutally honest with where you sit as you read through each point.

1. Consistent staff training and upskilling.

YOUR SCORE \_\_\_ /10

Is there consistent training and upskilling of all staff, not only in their area of responsibility, expertise and product knowledge but also in areas of professional development like adapting to change, tapping into a high-performance mindset, resilience?

2. Business strategy in place.

YOUR SCORE \_\_\_ /10

Do you have a business strategy to guide you and the team to where you want to take the business? Einstein said, "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler." We say, "Business planning should



be made as simple as possible, but no simpler.” This means that there must be enough juice in your plan to make the squeeze meaningful and last the distance, but not so much that it’s overflowing and becomes too much to keep track of.

3. Business owners and leaders **don’t** get caught up in the day-to-day whirlwind of the business.

YOUR SCORE \_\_\_ /10

Oof! We know you feel this, and you feel it deeply. You’re not getting pulled into the whirlwind or the busy trap. You can take time away from the office without being constantly connected to devices and the team makes autonomous decisions on your behalf. You’re not dealing with client calls on the weekends.

Check out your results. What did you get out of 30? Is there a pattern in your scores, specific areas that surprise you by being low or high? If your scores are on the lower side, we’ve got you! In the pages that follow, we’re giving you the blueprint to continue to build a sustainable business.

### LET'S GET REAL

In my house we have what we call a doom room (if you're also in a neurospicy household, you might relate). It's the room in the house where things get dumped, sometimes never to return. Can you relate to any of these:

- Someone's coming over and you have to tidy up real quick, put it in the doom room.
- Don't have time to put away the washing before the cleaner gets here, pop it in the doom room.
- Something doesn't have its own place and you're sick of seeing it, to the doom room!

You get the picture. Not to air my dirty laundry for everyone to see, but when I think about this idea of a doom room, I wonder, *What's in the metaphorical doom room of your business?*

It's likely to be the things you already have on your radar that:

- Need your attention but maybe are not the sexiest or most fun tasks so it's easier to ignore (hello cashflow planning and profit management or sales systems).
- You must do but you don't have time (like coaching and training your team).
- Are important but they're not urgent so they can wait (we're looking at you processes and documentation).

If there's any chance of breaking out of the day-to-day whirlwind, opening the door to your doom room and shining the light in is the only way. The best way to do this? Getting good at smart business growth.

Okay, okay, you've heard us go on and on about smart business growth, heck it's plastered all over our website, socials, it's the name of our podcast and we'll talk about it at any chance we get. Let us take you through exactly what smart business growth means. There are three key areas that need to be in place to classify business growth as smart growth.

## **1. An *intentional* approach to planning, sales and profit.**

*What this looks like:*

- Challenging the norms around what business success looks like for you.
- Having sales *and* profit targets (a \$10 million dollar turnover means nothing if you're not making a profit. Profit gives you freedom and choice, and allows you to enjoy the rewards of all your work).
- Including a section in your business plan that's dedicated to life goals. This gives you a holistic approach to reach your 'true north' in all areas of business and life, and fosters optimal energy and an environment for sustainable success.

## **2. Building an empowered and autonomous team.**

*What this looks like:*

- Making sure both your business and your team are growing and striving for peak performance.
- Having a clear definition of high performance that becomes the compass of behaviour and values guiding the team's actions.
- Establishing consistent operating rhythms that create a culture of transparency to allow you to trust in the team stepping up so you can take a step back.

## **3. Establishing time freedom as a standard, for *all* people in the business.**

*What this looks like:*

- Leveraging natural drivers and strengths of people to maximise return on effort, reducing number of hours worked, and shifting the focus away from time and towards outcomes.

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- Being crystal clear on priorities to create a proactive environment instead of a rushed and reactive environment.
- Establishing solid boundaries and unspoken ground rules that apply for all in the business ... even (especially) you!

Business owners and leaders often admit to being the bottleneck in their own business. It comes down to feeling like there's no time, or not knowing where to start that stops them from doing things a different way from how they've always done it.

Good is the barrier to challenging the status quo because good is comfortable. It takes more gusto to create change when things are good, and the pay-off when you do is that it will take things *from good to great*.

## IT'S OUR DUTY OF CARE

The four-hour work week might be a myth when you're starting out in business, but what if it could be a reality for you now? In the early days, you needed to put in **double the effort for half the reward**. Now it's time for you to get **double the result with half the effort**. You've earned your stripes in terms of time in business, size of your team, your business model and how you serve your clients. Maybe it's time to challenge the conventional thinking of what a successful business looks like. Dare to dream and think differently.

What if the opposite of what you believe a 'successful business' looks like could be true? If the 5 am Club didn't have to be the only way to start your morning in a 'successful' way. If you could achieve massive results without a massive team. Or if you could do more by doing less. We're not here to say what definition of success is right or wrong for you. That's up to you to figure out. What we do want to do is get you to think deliberately about what a great business by design looks like for you! We want to challenge your thinking around the status quo and the 'norms' that have automatically been set for you. Have you thinking

## THE HOURS ARE LONG: THE JUGGLE IS REAL

outside the box about what your business could be like. A great way to get into creative thinking is by looking at what your *outrageous opposites* could be. Let's get curious and map it out.

Imagine you have a magic wand in your hand and anything could be true. There's no right or wrong and the limitations of the stories you tell yourself don't exist right now. Park them and put them to the side if they come up (you can always pick them up later).



Write a list of what success looks like to you right now – whether you do them or not doesn't matter. This is a list of things you *believe* to be true about a successful businessperson, CEO, founder, director, manager.

To help kick you off, things that could be on the list (these are just a guide to get you started, make sure you write your own ideas) are:

- 5 am Club.
- Starting work at 8 am.
- Working after hours.
- Working long hours (70+ hours a week), six or seven days a week.
- Having a team of 50+ full-time workers in an office.
- \$10 million+ turnover.
- Having a bricks and mortar office.



- On the go constantly, busy, busy ... shows importance.
- Knowing the detail of all clients and attending every client meeting.
- Being across all detail in the business, across all departments.

Now get playful and bring your 'what ifs' to the party. Write down what *could be* the outrageous opposite of each item on your list?

**Note:** It's important to park any doubts around how these things are achievable, that comes later. Remember, right now you have a magic wand in your hand:

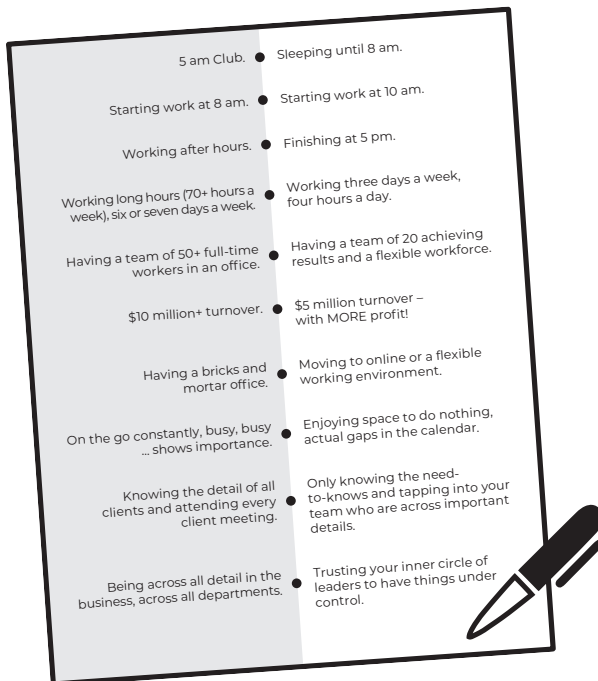
- Sleeping until 8 am.
- Starting work at 10 am.
- Finishing at 5 pm.
- Working three days a week, four hours a day.
- Having a team of 20 achieving results and a flexible workforce.
- \$5 million turnover – with MORE profit!
- Moving to online or a flexible working environment.
- Enjoying space to do nothing, actual gaps in the calendar.
- Only knowing the need-to-knows and tapping into your team who are across important details.

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- Trusting your inner circle of leaders to have things under control.

When you have your list of outrageous opposites, you can start to observe, ideate, get curious about how they could become your reality. What if it is your reality? What would change for you if you eased the pressure of how it *should* be and focused instead on how you *want* it to be? No rules, no bad ideas, just getting creative with ideas **and** creative with how you could achieve it.



## HEALTHY HUSTLE

Past success doesn't guarantee future success and continuing to only use the same approach you have previously is fraught with danger. Hustle culture is out of control and if you can take stock of where you sit on the hustle spectrum (unhealthy or healthy), it will give you the chance to gain some control over the shifting sands that are creating your ideal (or not ideal) future in business.

It's our responsibility as a collective to lead the charge when it comes to growing our businesses in a balanced way and show that winning doesn't have to be at a cost, or a sacrifice of joy and life. Let us ask you, if not now, then when? If not you, then who? The impact of creating change on you, your family, your team, your business and the flow-on effect to your community is huge (and something to embrace). In the words of Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*, not doing anything is a "Big mistake. Big. Huge."

**It's time to release the weight of expectations on how you *should* be doing business, so that you can create a business on your own terms.**

## The Daily Grind

Caitlin was three years into her business, a HR firm started in the thick of Covid crazy, when she made the decision to prioritise a pause and join a session we ran called How to Thrive in Business ... Without the Burnout.

A week later, we received a voice message from Caitlin. One of the 1% actions she took from that day was to book a long-overdue doctor's appointment as she'd been noticing a 'weird pain' in her jaw.

They found a hairline fracture in her bottom jaw caused by grinding her teeth.

Can you imagine continuing with the pain of a hairline fracture because you're so entrenched in the daily grind and don't have time to get it checked out. Not to mention the amount of stress that would cause that amount of grinding! You might have had a similar experience yourself. In fact, you most likely have but possibly haven't taken the time to acknowledge the significant reality that this has become your norm.

Caitlin told us after the workshop that she was stuck in survival mode despite doing all the courses, training and personal development. Caitlin is an incredibly smart and savvy businesswoman doing many wonderful things, not only in her business but also in her community. She is a giver in every sense of the word. The obvious that screams out here is that she was giving to everyone around her, putting

## HEALTHY HUSTLE

herself last. And in her words, this was the kick up the backside she knew she needed.

The duty of care Caitlin has to take care of herself isn't just for her. It's for all the people around her that she works with and impacts every day, as well as her team, her family, and her community organisations that she gives so generously to. Being stuck in the whirlwind can be a blocker to the most foundational levels of self-care – like going to a doctor.

Taking the 1% action, in this case coming along to our workshop and doing the one action she committed to, was the first step to her no longer avoiding what she knew needed attention. For Caitlin, it wasn't her business tasks that were locked away in a doom room but those related to her health and wellbeing.

Is your business more important than your health sometimes? Are you waiting to stumble on major health issues by chance because you're burying your head in the sand, don't have time or it's not the most important thing on your list right now rather than proactively preventing them?

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