

Harness Your Inner Genius

HOW TO DREAM BIG AND GROW YOUR BUSINESS

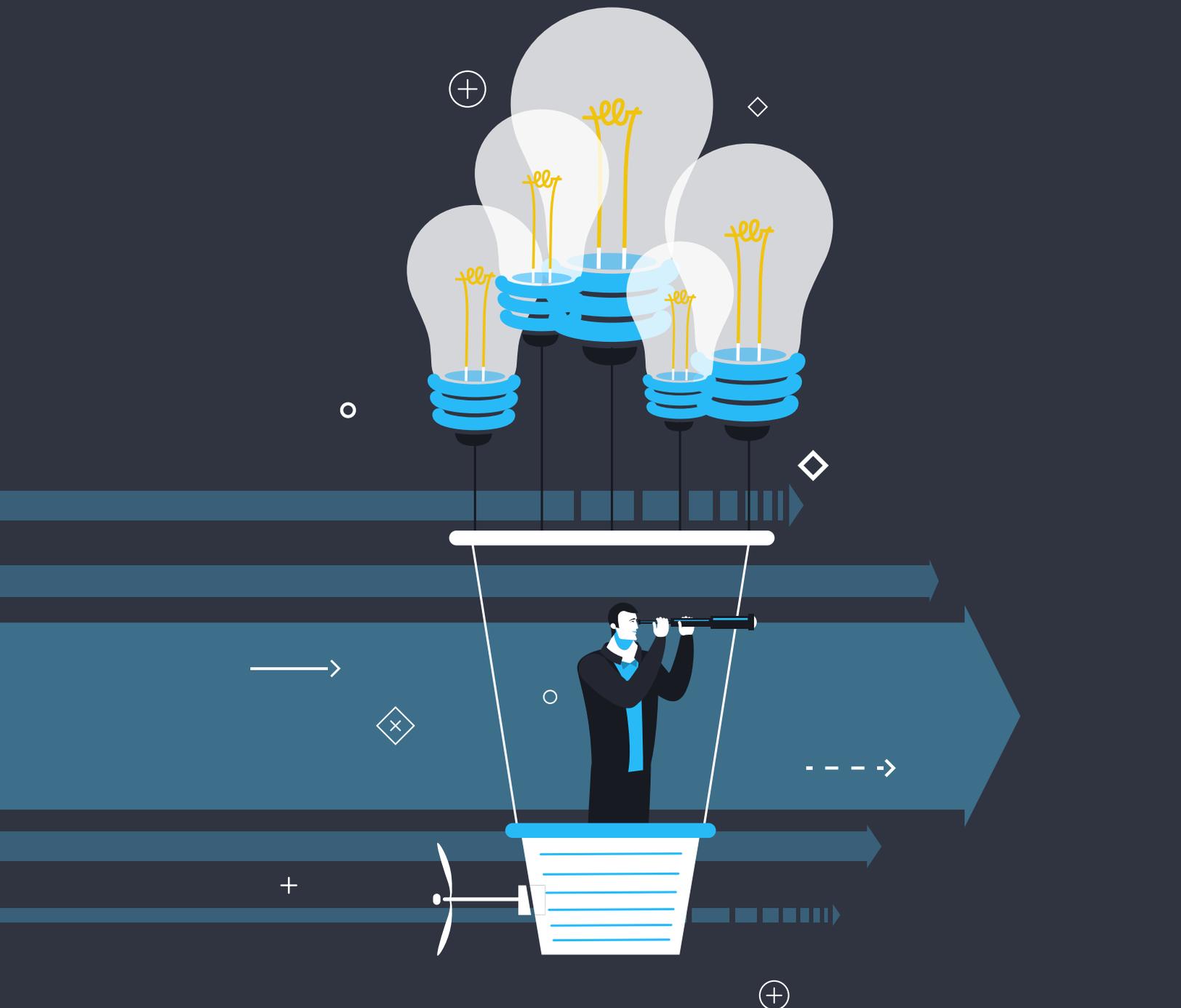
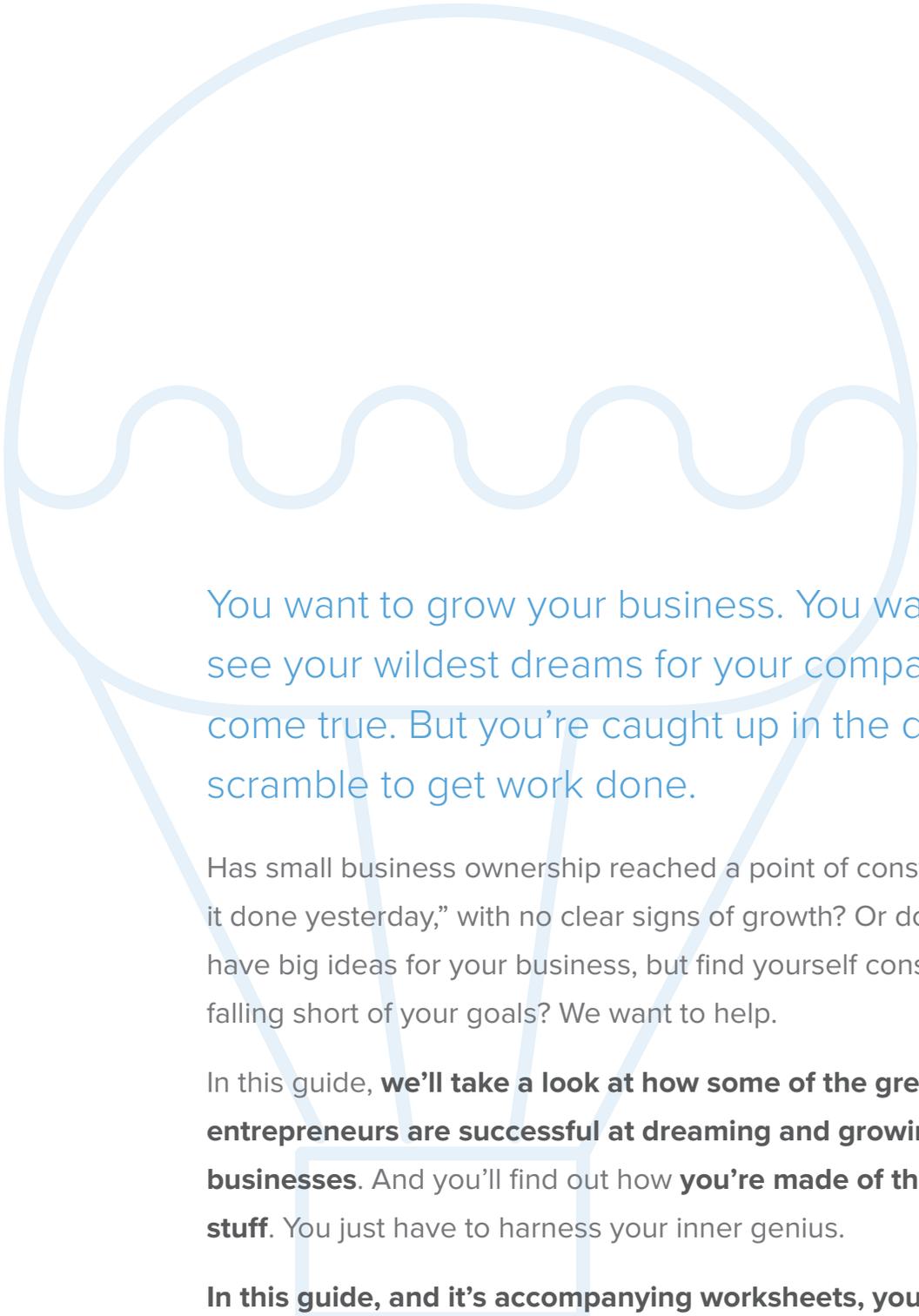


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You want to grow your business. You want to see your wildest dreams for your company come true. But you're caught up in the daily scramble to get work done.

Has small business ownership reached a point of constant “get it done yesterday,” with no clear signs of growth? Or do you have big ideas for your business, but find yourself consistently falling short of your goals? We want to help.

In this guide, **we'll take a look at how some of the greatest entrepreneurs are successful at dreaming and growing their businesses.** And you'll find out how **you're made of that same stuff.** You just have to harness your inner genius.

In this guide, and it's accompanying worksheets, you'll learn:

- Where your genius lies
- How to manage around your constraints
- How to create a personalized plan to take your leadership to the next level

How to Use this Guide

This guide is intended to help you consider where your business is today, and help you imagine the extraordinary heights to which you can take it. We've designed this as a workbook. Along the way, we will ask questions to help you learn about yourself and how to grow into a more powerful business owner.

To gain the most from this content, you should be ready to interact with the ideas. Three things:

- This is about evaluating you as a small business owner
- Take the time to answer each question
- Block out adequate time to complete the entire workbook (we suggest at least 38 minutes)

Let's get started!



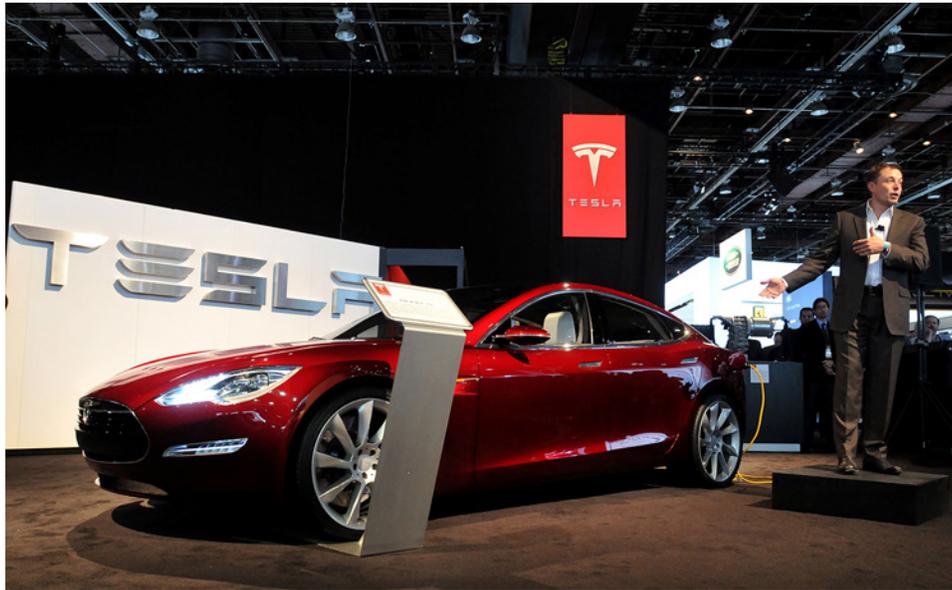


What is Your Inner Genius?

When we talk about “harnessing your inner genius,” we refer to an amazing capacity for invention that’s inherent within most humans. But it turns out that we are also biologically programmed to resist the voice of our inner genius. Only a select few are able to connect with it, and when they do, they are able to accomplish astonishing feats.

This genius combines our capacity for innovation, imagination, problem solving, project management, leadership, and acute awareness of the world around us. The best examples of this genius in action are the self-made billionaires. They are the elite who are not just in the right place at the right time, but have the vision and capacity for execution to forge a dream into reality against all odds.

Take Elon Musk, for example. He’s something of a modern-day Iron Man. When you look at his life and success as an entrepreneur, it’s unparalleled. He started a number of companies. One, Space X, is pushing the envelope on space exploration in the 21st century.



Another is Tesla, which established electric vehicles as viable competitors to the internal combustion engine. Few have had the diversity of entrepreneurial success that Elon Musk has, and at 44 years old he's just getting started.

Maybe you're thinking, "He's a genius. He's exceptional. He's not like me."

True. You're not like him, but we're here to help explore the genius that is in you.

You're a business owner, working hard to grow your company. You've made it this far because you've dared to follow your dreams. You've put in the long hours. I'm sure you can look back and think of a moment when you muscled through tough times, when it would have been easy to give up. But you kept going, and you've seen the rewards.

Now you're at a crossroads. You've got some momentum, and you're looking to grow your company to the next level. But every new burst of growth is exponentially more challenging than the last, and sometimes finding a big vision is the toughest part.

In this e-book we want you to help you dream big. Really big—bigger than you've ever dreamt before. And help you realize what it takes to get there.

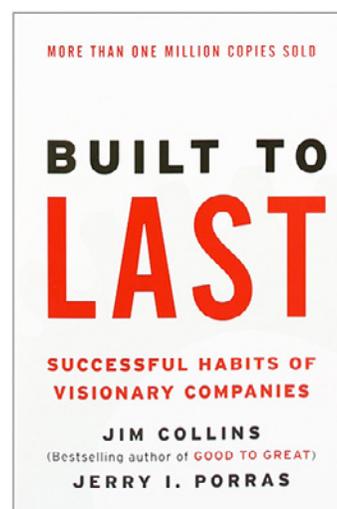
If you've had the courage and determination to make it this far, then you have an inner genius. The greatest way to harness that genius is by setting a mission that defines the future of your company.



Set a Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal

A Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal (or, BHAG—pronounced Bee-HAG) is a vision statement that defines your company’s trajectory for the next three to five years and brings the drive for progress to life. This idea was coined by **Jim Collins** in his book, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*. We strongly recommend that you read this book if you haven’t already.

Your objective in developing a BHAG is to push your company to the limits of possibility, beyond what you think you’re capable of right now. The key word is “audacious.” Your vision should be big—so big that it stretches your organization but at the same time unifies your company with a single purpose that everyone in the organization can rally around.



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"A true BHAG is clear and compelling, serves as unifying focal point of effort, and acts as a clear catalyst for team spirit. It has a clear finish line, so the organization can know when it has achieved the goal; people like to shoot for finish lines."

- Jim Collins, *Built to Last*

.....

From the outside, your BHAG may seem unreasonable, but to your team on the inside, it will be the fire that drives you toward greatness.

Take a minute to think about your vision for your company as it stands today and compare it to where you think your really could go. This is not your BHAG; instead, you're thinking in terms of what you know and imagine here and now.

State your company's three-year vision as it stands right now:

Gut Check: Will you accomplish it? Yes No (Circle One)

In an ideal world, where could your company be three years from now? What are some things on your wish list? Consider revenue, team size, and evidences of market penetration. Dream bigger!



This will Take Guts

It takes guts to create a BHAG. It's a public pronouncement that reaches for the impossible. There's a lot at stake when you make a statement like that.

While you do have an inner genius, you'll have to overcome inertia to exercise it.

Generally, we tend not to exercise our genius. We all suffer from a biological tendency to live relatively safe and humdrum lives, and we tend to shy away from risk. Geniuses, self-made billionaires, and other highly successful people conquer this tendency. If you as a small business owner are to do the same, you need to take a look at who you are and what makes you tick so that you can make the right adjustments.

Let's dig a little deeper.



Part 1: The “Humdrum Conundrum”

Our brain is wired to keep us safe. In order to avoid danger, it constantly anticipates what will happen next. The result is that we are very good at future prediction. In fact, our brain does it even when we don’t consciously realize it.

We predict the future based on our past experiences: Recent studies suggest that we use the same part of our brain for future prediction that we use for storing memory. This implies that our memories and our perception of the future are deeply intertwined.

Our survival instinct takes this a level further. Our brain constantly runs simulations of predictable future outcomes based on our set of experiences, prompting us to make choices that are safest for us.

Take, for example, your experience as a driver. If you see out of the corner of your eye a car swerving into your lane, your reaction—to brake and swerve out of the way—happens before you can consciously think of the best response. You don’t think through your options—you just act. Actually, in a fraction of a second, your brain ran through the options for you, and you

responded out of instinct. On a subconscious, imperceptible level, this happens all the time—when you decide whether to order pepperoni or mushroom on your pizza, when you deliver your elevator pitch, and importantly, when you dream about your next big venture.

Because we are programmed for survival, we tend to act in general harmony with our prediction of the safest future. Yet our prediction is based on the past, which means our new actions generally repeat history, laying out for us a default future. As you can imagine, the default future contains very little innovation and very little risk.

This tendency to stay in a traditional pattern is, what we call, the "humdrum conundrum."

Through humdrum conundrum, we create a default future in the way we do business, sales, and marketing. And as much as we like to think we're change agents moving our small business forward, far too often, this year looks a lot like last year.

If we want to create a BHAG for our company to grow our business ten, twenty, even one hundred times, we first have to change our default future.



To get you thinking about where you suffer from humdrum conundrum, consider several key aspects of your business that you do as a matter of course (for example, you haven’t considered your sales funnel in years, and therefore, your approach to your lead nurture process has gone unchanged for that long).

Name those aspects:

What is it costing your business to be stagnant in these areas?

How are they getting in the way of you accomplishing your BHAG?

How to change your default future

Let’s look at the experience of people who have already changed the default future and see what worked for them. It turns out that the most successful entrepreneurs excel in two very important areas:

1. **Innovation:** They solve problems, imagine new markets, and creatively answer questions in ways no one else is doing.
2. **Execution:** They are more competent and work harder than everyone around them.

Truth be told, we all have these skills inside us, to some extent. A few of us naturally excel at both. The rest of us tend to lean to one side or the other, but to be geniuses, we need to wrangle our weaker half into submission. Once you identify the kind of business owner you are, you can then take a more balanced and powerful approach to the future of your business.



Part 2: How to be a Better Innovator

As a Dream Manager at Infusionsoft, I (Dan) am in a very unique position. My job is to help people imagine doing things that are so ambitious that they border on the miraculous. While we all have imaginations, some people come built to dream. People with imaginations are poised to do great things. They can see their ideas fitting in the world, and they aren't afraid to think big.

The greatest geniuses can imagine possibilities outside of the default future—not just their own default futures but also the world's default future.

For example, as one of her ventures in the 1990s, Lynda Rae Harris, a self-made billionaire purchased a large tract of agricultural land and planted pomegranates, which were relatively unheard of at the time. Ten years later, she read a study citing the health benefits of the antioxidants in the fruit and realized the potential market opportunity. She was poised to pounce. The study noted that a person would need to consume two pomegranates per day to get a significant health benefit. Thus, Pom Wonderful juice was born with the characteristic bulbous bottle, shaped distinctively like a

pair of stacked pomegranates. Pomegranate juice became a household item.

Harris’ way of seeing the market potential and meeting it with a timely product is what John Sviokla and Mitch Cohen term in their [study of self-made billionaires](#), as “Empathetic Imagination.”

1 Use empathetic imagination

In the article, they state: “In almost all stories of self-made billionaire success, there is a similar blockbuster idea, conceived with a similar formula: awareness, empathy, imagination, and knowledge. The producer has typically worked in the field long enough to have an awareness of critical trends...sees an underexploited customer need, and experiences deep empathy for those customers.”

What is one pain that your customer consistently feels hasn’t been solved?

What is it costing your business to be stagnant in this areaa?

How is it getting in the way of you accomplishing your BHAG?

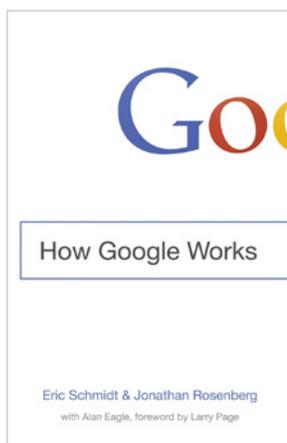
This type of keen imagination allows them to turn the idea into a business with wide ranging potential.

True innovators aren't some breed of pie-in-the-sky daydreamers. They have a very powerful approach to imagining what's possible in the world, founded on "first principle reasoning."

2 Use first-principles reasoning

First principles are essentially those fundamental concepts on which theories, systems, or methods are based. First principles reasoning starts with the most fundamental truths and then imagines from there.

If, for example, scientific first principles state that humans can develop rockets for space travel (and have been improving them for decades), then it's possible to develop a better rocket. Therefore, SpaceX can be a company that develops a better rocket. While the idea of starting your own rocket company seems unreasonable on the surface, the starting premise is based in absolute fact.



Eric Schmidt, former CEO of Google said, "It turns out most people haven't been educated in this kind of moon shot thinking. They tend to assume things are impossible rather than starting from real-world physics, and figuring out what's actually possible."

Most people tend to base their conduct on analogy rather than first principles. When we reason by analogy, we do something because *it's like something else that was done or what other people are doing*.

When you look at the future of your business, what possibilities have you already dismissed.

Could you be a billionaire? Stop! Honestly assess how you just responded to that from your gut.

Most people quickly dismiss the idea of being a billionaire. Yet, physics says it's possible. Therefore, it is possible. The only question is, "How?" Imagine the impact of thinking in this way.

What parts of your company's current business model are based on assumption (marketing strategies, processes, products)?

Distill this down: What are the first principles are these assumptions based on?

Name an audacious moonshot idea for your business that is rooted in first principle thinking:

3 Imagine with a larger purpose in mind

Innovators ask bigger questions: “What could my business do to change the world? What could my business do to disrupt the way that things happen in my industry?”

I would argue that when you put empathetic imagination and first principles thinking together, you’re very likely to find yourself thinking about your business’ larger purpose.

Take a cue from Musk, whose **purpose for founding Tesla Motors** was bigger than profitability. “Our goal,” said Musk, “When we created Tesla a decade ago was the same as it is today. To accelerate the advent of sustainable transport by bringing mass market electric cars to market. As soon as possible.”

Purpose drives this kind of innovative thinking, which gives your employees, your customers, and your fans real reason to cheer for your success.

What’s the purpose of your business?

What impact or influence could you have in the world?

What will be your legacy?



Part 3: How to be a Better Executor

Executors get the work done. They're the ones still working when the lights are being shut down and the janitor is vacuuming the hall. They have an intelligence for execution that includes an ability to strategize, manage complex tasks, and implement.

To be successful, executors display three important traits:

1 Vulnerability

It takes courage to dream. We submit that it takes even more courage to begin work on a dream. You may be starting a new business venture, building a new product, or launching a major project; either way, there's risk in entering the unknown. Will this succeed? What happens if we fail? Executors enter a vulnerable position when they choose to begin executing on a dream. This territory is actually the first, and arguably the biggest hurdle because it means rewiring your brain's need for self-preservation.

Ask yourself, what's your brand of fear? Circle all that apply:

- Fear of failure?
- Fear of success?
- Fear of disappointing someone?
- Fear of losing it all?
- Other: _____

Cheung Yan, founder of Nine Dragons Paper, one of the world's largest paper recyclers, launched her business in Hong Kong using her life savings of around \$8,000. If that wasn't a big enough risk, in 1990, she closed her burgeoning business and moved across the Pacific to start from scratch in California, where she took advantage of the abundant resources, including the supply of recycled paper.

Vulnerability means looking at a risk and understanding that it's not necessarily a safe path, but it's a worthy path. Over the years, her company has weathered numerous storms, but her steadfast, resilient work has landed her among the self-made billionaire elite. Had she rested on her laurels in her first endeavor in Hong Kong, she may very well have lost her business to the very real danger of the diminishing supply of Chinese trees and organized crime. Instead, she made a vulnerable move, and came out on top, earning the nickname "Wastepaper Queen."



2 Commitment

If the motivation is right, and if you're committed enough, you can accomplish incredible feats. Successful entrepreneurs, geniuses, and self-made billionaires all share one common trait: tenacity—unwavering commitment.

In an [interview with CBS](#) on why Musk got into the rocket business without knowing anything about rockets, Musk declared, “When something is important enough, you do it even if the odds are not in your favor.”

One of the most salient attributes of Musk, is commitment. In [2002, after selling PayPal to eBay, he was suddenly \\$200 million richer](#), but instead of sitting on the profits, he invested all his resources into launching SpaceX and Tesla. Even when it looked like both new ventures would fail, he found ways to prop them up and keep them going.

It's probable that you, too, have faced similar obstacles on the road of small business ownership. Your commitment and grit has carried you through those tough times, and you've come out on the other side proud that you didn't give up.

On the other hand, if we're honest, many of us can admit that we're not fully committed to our business. I (Dan) often ask people how much they would bet that the dream they're pursuing will come true. The takers will usually put up \$100 (the most I've ever seen is \$1,000). In a way, this is an indicator of their level of commitment—they are hesitant to bet big because they're unsure and can't fully see themselves making the dream come true. For perspective, Musk had a \$200 million level of commitment, and Yan put her entire life savings on the line. That level of commitment is what makes them different.

How committed are you to your business right now? Look at your behaviors:

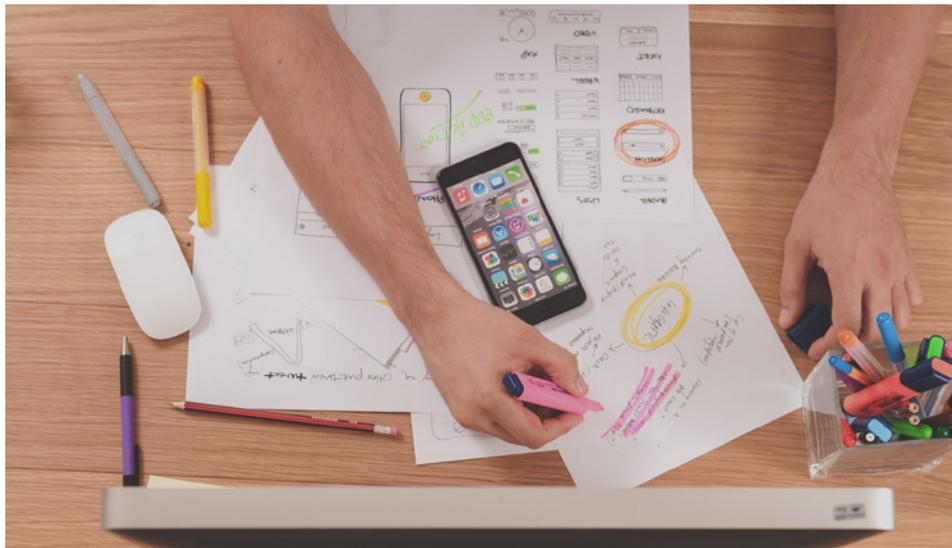
How committed are you to your business right now? List your behaviors:

Has anything come in the way of your business that's lessened your commitment to your business?

3 Hard work

This aspect of the executor is what most of us would expect when we think of the people who get the job done. We often admire their ability to put their head down and do whatever it takes to build the business. In fact, every entrepreneurial success that I've ever talked to says there's at least one period of flat-out, run like crazy, dog-tired hustle. It's the make-or-break period of the business.

Some of us already have that propensity, the workaholics who work until all hours of the night. And while we say that workaholics have crossed a line, there are periods that businesses will go through where that level of hard work is absolutely necessary. Sometimes those periods last longer than we'd like, and it's often those periods that make or break a company.





Part 4: We're Half-baked

At the end of the day the vast majority of us are half-baked. We tend to lean either toward imagination or toward execution. Rarely do people excel at both.

People who lean toward imagination find it easy to dream big. They have big plans for how they will change the world with their brilliant idea; it's totally cutting edge. The sky's the limit for what's possible. But when you ask a dreamer what they are doing about it, they often answer, "Thinking. Right now I'm thinking about it."

On the other hand, we have the people who are really great at execution. They start their day with a to-do list, and they check off more items per day than their neighbor. They're driven and consistent. But when you ask them about imagination, far too often they consider dreaming to be impractical. They respond to new ways of approaching work with a level of cynicism and critique.

To maximize your effectiveness as a business owner and take your small business to great heights, you need a BHAG to aim

for and rally around. But before you can truly dream big and take your business to the next level, you have to understand that it will require both innovation and execution.

Which way do you lean: Innovation or execution?

If you lean toward execution, you'll need to recognize that it's not enough to just get the work done. If you really want growth; if you really want to accomplish great things, you have to take big risks. You have to be willing to step into the dark, unsure if it'll all work out. You'll have to loosen that tight fisted, white-knuckle control you have over your world.

On the other hand, if you lean toward imagination, you need to be aware that as brilliant as your ideas are, they're worthless without the daily, consistent rigor it will take to make them come true. You need the discipline it takes to wake up early in the morning and tackle all day long the uncomfortable and boring tasks that don't fuel your imagination's fire.

Nine questions to help find out which way you lean:

Question	Answer (pick the truest answer per question)	
To be fulfilled at work, I need:	<input type="checkbox"/> to investigate solutions to our biggest concerns	<input type="checkbox"/> to report successful completion of key projects
My colleagues see me as:	<input type="checkbox"/> full of zeal, creative, energetic	<input type="checkbox"/> organized, methodical, detailed
As a manager, my highest priority for my team is:	<input type="checkbox"/> interesting and unique problem solving; bold ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> on-time performance of tasks; competence
As a manager, I'm least tolerant of:	<input type="checkbox"/> easy answers, lack of enthusiasm	<input type="checkbox"/> disorganized work, lack of hustle
In a group event, I'm the one that	<input type="checkbox"/> works the room, making sure everyone is having a good time	<input type="checkbox"/> quietly helps keep things moving smoothly
When faced with seemingly impossible odds, I:	<input type="checkbox"/> cut my losses and move on to my next big challenge	<input type="checkbox"/> hunker down, knowing that I can muscle my way through to the end
In my private relationships, I am:	<input type="checkbox"/> tuned in to the needs of others, offering compassion and excitement	<input type="checkbox"/> aware of the complexities of relationships, and I love to offer advice and stability
People who know me best would say I am:	<input type="checkbox"/> the one who sets the vision and leads people forward, but can miss details along the way	<input type="checkbox"/> gets it done, nails projects, can be depended on in a pinch, but doesn't always anticipate the long term trends
In my business, I tend to be most concerned with:	<input type="checkbox"/> how my business will evolve to meet new trends in the market and beat the competition	<input type="checkbox"/> how I can manage our finances and tweak our processes to maximize profitability
Total your score, one point/answer	TOTAL:	TOTAL:

Column A answers tend to be true for innovators, Column B answers tend to be true for executors. Whichever column scores highest will help indicate which way you lean.

Bonus: If you want to dive even deeper to discover your native genius for either innovation or execution, you can use the Myers-Briggs Personality Test or the Real Colors Personality Test. Because these tests are ones that most people are familiar with, we've outlined the results that trend more toward execution or innovation.

Innovators	Executors
INFP, ENFP, INFJ, ENFJ / Blue	ESFJ, ISFJ, ESTJ, ISTJ / Gold
ESFP, ISFP, ESTP, ISTP / Orange	INTJ, ENTJ, INTP, ENTP / Green



Part 5: To Change the Default Future, Find Balance

The reality is that we can make decent business owners of ourselves when we're half-baked. We can build relatively successful small businesses by leaning one way or the other. But if we are going to follow in the footsteps of the most successful entrepreneurs, we need to master both innovation and execution.

Tips for executors to discover balance:

- Take an afternoon away from work, away from electronic devices, away from distraction. List one hundred possibilities for your business. Don't hold back! Go into the realm of fantasy, even.
 - One up your ideas: Where you wrote 1 million, imagine 2 million.
 - Shrink the timeline: Where you suggest a

three-year goal, what would it take to achieve that goal in one year?

- Connect to a larger purpose. Do some soul searching and find a vision you can believe in. Find out what inspires you. How can this inspire your employees? Your family? Your neighbors?
- Pick one thing that seems outrageous to your logical, task-oriented brain, and accomplish it. Set a timeline of one year or less, and stick to it.



Tips for Innovators to discover balance:

- Pick one of your big, hairy imagined goals, and make a plan. Outline the key steps to accomplishing the goal. Identify exactly what it would take to accomplish the dream.
 - Chunk out the process into phases, and start work on phase one.
- Understand and practice commitment. This is actually pretty simple. It's about living in integrity, doing precisely what you say you will do, and seeing that it's done on time.
 - Show up on time to meetings. Make deadlines, even if it means working through the night.
 - Increase your integrity percentage. If you are at 70 percent, get to 80 percent.
- Brace yourself to commit for the long term. This means that you have to measure your progress on your commitments so that you can ensure you're making progress. It means you have to learn to table your dreams. If you tend to be a starter, commit to being a finisher.

Because we're only half-baked, one of the very best ways we can immediately have impact is to find those around us who can support us in our effort. The best way to address weaknesses is to manage around them. If you're someone who leans toward imagination, that's awesome! Hire someone who's great at execution. If your strengths lie in execution, fantastic! Surround yourself with innovators.

Not in a position to hire the people you need to support your other half? It doesn't mean you're out of luck. Find mentors or coaches who can help balance you so that you can lead powerfully.

Out of your genius, create a BHAG

The genius inside you is most powerful when it's balanced. Now that you have a sense of where you are strongest, and how to create balance, you can develop a Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal for your company.

As you create your BHAG, be sure to keep the following in mind:

- Your vision should be rooted in first principles thinking. It should be wildly possible.
- Create milestones to track your progress. These should be laid out along with the vision.
- Ensure your BHAG is measurable. You should know precisely when you reach your goal.
- Make sure it addresses a larger purpose that your employees and customers can rally around.

We all have the capacity for greatness: There is an inner genius inside of each of us. When you have the courage to dream big and the grit to forge the path toward that goal, you can show the world your genius.

For every person who executes big, who loves to engineer through a problem and see every task completed ahead of

schedule, there's something inside that wants to imagine the wildest, most game-changing goals this work ethic can execute.

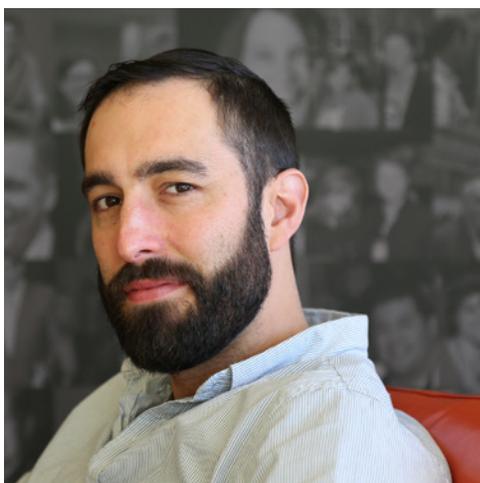
For those people with bold imaginations, the creative innovators, there's something inside that wants to see those dreams realized, those visions fleshed out. What if we could figure out how to blend ridiculous imagination with consistent execution? Chances are, when we can do that, our dreams literally will come true.





Dan Ralphs

Dan Ralphs' official title at Infusionsoft, a growing software company in Chandler Arizona, is Dream Manager. Now in case you didn't know, a Dream Manager is someone who specializes in helping others identify, commit to, and pursue the best version of themselves. Dan works diligently to help employees at Infusionsoft to accelerate their rate of growth toward a better future. Before turning his full attention to dreaming, Dan traveled the globe helping entrepreneurs lay the foundations of their dreams by establishing solid sales and marketing systems.



Ben Snedeker

Ben Snedeker joined Infusionsoft in 2015 to do full time that which he loves most: writing the stories that inspire action. He holds a MFA in Creative Writing from Emerson College. In his prior life, he was a freelance writer working days at MIT as a grant manager. After a decade of paper pushing in academia, writing for a fast moving company like Infusionsoft is his dream come true. A perennial tinkerer, when he's not in the office, he can't help but tend his bonsai trees, edit other people's writing, and make sure his kids clear their plates before they leave the table.

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