

# PETRACOACH<sup>POST</sup>

A MAGAZINE FOR BUSINESS AND TEAMS

**Building Business  
Momentum After  
The Summer Slump:  
START NOW TO  
TACKLE FALL WITH  
THESE 5 TIPS**

With Mandy Burage

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**YOUR FRAGILE  
MINDSET ISN'T  
JUST HOLDING YOU  
BACK, IT'S HOLDING  
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Failing Its Students; NOLA  
Education And Petra Are  
Working Together To Get  
More Teens To Graduation**

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## Welcome To *Petra Coach Post Magazine!*

I ONCE was told that not reading is worse than not being able to read!

Reading has been central to my personal and professional growth period. But it wasn't always that way. There was a time when I was stuck and, frankly, just didn't know what I didn't know. Reading, combined with action, changed that forever.

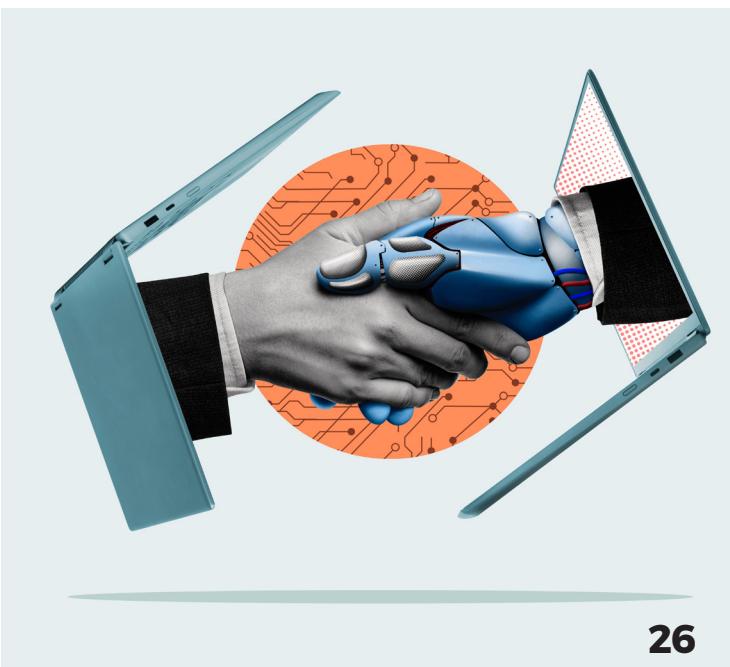
In today's digital world where speed is king, I'm asking that we take a few minutes to slow down, put the phone away, turn down the noise, and simply hold the pages in our hands, breathe a little slower, and read.

For this reason, we have created this magazine: a set of simple, easy-to-digest articles from thought leaders and friends curated just for you. Each quarter we bring you a few ideas to shift your thinking and provide insights you and your team need to change for the better.

The Petra Post cover story this quarter is a powerful story of organizational evolution from NOLA Education. Petra Coach has been working with NOLA Education for a few years now, and we are proud to share their journey of triumph and growth as they continue. 

Read on!

**ANDY BAILEY**  
**FOUNDER**  
**PETRACOACH.COM**



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# Nothing Is Stronger Than What We Believe

BY ANDY BAILEY, FOUNDER, PETRA COACH

**FORCES BEYOND** your control can take away everything you possess except one thing: your freedom to choose what you believe and how you respond.

I re-read five books each year, and I'll share a list with you later in this article. One of the most important books to me is *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl. This book is a reflection of Mr. Frankl's personal experience of his time as a prisoner at Auschwitz. One of the many messages in his story is that nothing is stronger than what we believe to be true.

Our beliefs create our reality. If we believe we are a victim of our circumstances and cannot do anything, then we will not make any progress. If we believe we have at least some level of control, then we can make progress.

Life is complex, and its complexity will only increase. There are constant outside pressures around us, and it's easy to feel like everything is out of our control. Sure, things like governments, weather, traffic, and so on are out of our control. Accepting what we have no control over versus what we can control can relieve a lot of anxiety.

Control what you can control and accept responsibility for your circumstances. In essence, prioritize what you can control. Acknowledge your part, move past blaming, and identify how to manage your circumstances effectively.

## HERE IS A SHORT LIST OF MY THOUGHTS ON BETTER CONTROLLING WHAT WE CAN CONTROL:

- Choose your data wisely. We have the choice to turn on the news daily, and we do so knowing that the news only shares what's negative in the world. On the other hand, if you step on a scale and don't like what you see, you'll have the data to inform your actions and measure progress, which is all within your control.

- Recognize what triggers you to fall into the mode of being the victim. When we blame just about everything instead of taking responsibility, we can't plan to move forward. Recognizing this will help you realign to responsibility and make positive steps forward.
- Everything is a choice. Arguably, the only thing we "must" do is sleep. Without sleep, we die. Everything else is a choice. When I can remind myself that "this is a choice, not a chore," it becomes within my control.
- Give yourself some *grace*. I love the word grace. My daughter is named Gracen. Life is a series of ups and downs, and we all need some grace.

Life is a pursuit of better without an end goal. We will never be perfect creatures, we will never get everything right, and we will always make mistakes. Choose wisely, know your triggers, realize it's your choice, and give yourself and others some grace.

## HERE ARE THE FIVE BOOKS THAT KEEP ME GROUNDED, THINKING, AND GROWING EACH YEAR:

- Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl
- The Obstacle Is the Way* by Ryan Holiday
- Younger Next Year* by Chris Crowley, et al.
- The Effective Executive* by Peter F. Drucker
- The 38 Letters from J.D. Rockefeller to His Son* by G. Ng

In pursuit of a life well lived! 🌟

**GET IN TOUCH WITH ANDY AT  
ANDY@PETRACOACH.COM**



# MISSION CONTROL

WITH PETRA COACH MEMBERS



**In an era dominated by external noise—from political turmoil and inflation to technological advances and social unrest—maintaining focus within our businesses is more critical than ever. At Petra Coach, we posed a vital question to our members:**

**"With all the external noise in our world today, what are you doing inside your business to maintain focus—for yourself and your team? How are you controlling what you can control?"**

**Their insightful responses reveal a commitment to core values, strategic planning, community engagement, and mental well-being. By concentrating on these controllable aspects, our members are not only navigating the chaos but also thriving amidst it, creating resilient, focused, and harmonious workplaces.**



## → COMPANY VALUES

“

We anchor our focus internally by reaffirming our core values and mission statement. By reminding ourselves of why we do what we do, we maintain a sense of purpose that blocks out the external noise and keeps us aligned towards our goals.

“

We have developed a one-pager that includes our strategic road map and core values that elegantly and simply describes our priorities and objectives. It is our chartered course.

“

We stay focused on our mission to serve our community. With so much going on in the world, it's easy to feel uneasy or anxious, but doing our part to help others in our area helps bring back a feeling of control (even on a small scale) and puts positivity back into the world. Having these experiences with our team together helps create that sense of camaraderie and open communication that makes our team work so smoothly together.

“

They say the only constant is change. By embracing change as a constant and fostering a growth mindset, we empower our team to pivot and innovate in response to challenges.

“

It's easy to get wrapped up in what other organizations are doing and comparing, but every company is unique. If what you are doing feels like it's working and your team seems happy, stick with it. Not to say you should become complacent or not aim to improve, but constantly worrying about what others are doing if it isn't impacting your team or business is wasted effort and one hell of a big distraction.

“

We emphasize the importance of critical thinking and discernment, especially in receiving information from the media, to enable our team to sift through the noise and discern credible sources from misinformation.

“

We pride ourselves on continuous learning and upskilling programs for our workforce. By staying ahead of the curve and embracing new technology, we ensure that our team remains adaptable and ready for the future.

“

We've invested in additional cybersecurity measures to safeguard against potential threats, mitigate risks, and instill confidence in our team and stakeholders.

“

We diversify our supply chain and distribution channels to mitigate risks and ensure business continuity.

## TECHNOLOGY

“

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“

We diversify our supply chain and distribution channels to mitigate risks and ensure business continuity.



# FINANCES / ECONOMY

“

**our quarterly strategic planning sessions help us to withstand uncertainties. With a consistent eye on our financial picture and organizational goals, we can make informed decisions that safeguard the long-term sustainability of our business.**

“

**We implement financial planning and risk management. By maintaining a strong balance sheet and liquidity reserves, we fortify our business against economic downturns and position ourselves for long-term success.**

“

**We have built a robust system of responsibilities and measurable outcomes that align with our plan and that we can monitor and control. We are focused on keeping our ship in good shape to weather the storms that are sure to come. From sales through execution, we have key objectives/measurables that give us real-time indications of our organizational health.**

# MINDFULNESS / SELF-CARE

“

**We emphasize the importance of mindfulness and mental wellness. We host regular meditation and stress management workshops to help equip our team with tools to navigate the noise and stay focused.**

“

**Recognizing the impact of the current state of affairs on mental health, we offer resources through our HR department such as counseling services to support our team's well-being and empower them to navigate the noise soundly.**

“

**We've been prioritizing mental health in a different way than we have in the past. We've worked to create an outlet and an openness to talk about anything in our teams' 1:1s without judgment, which has been really helpful. I think it's hard when people feel like they have to come to work and shut the outside world out.**

“

**We prioritize employee well-being through initiatives such as flexible work arrangements and mental health days. We work together to accommodate individual needs and foster a healthy work-life balance so our team members can truly thrive.**

# Even Adults Struggle To Balance It All—School, Work, Friends, Family—So Why Aren’t We Helping Our Children Learn How To Find Balance Early On?

WITH JOSIE PACELLI

**AS BUSINESS** leaders grow into their roles, no matter what their jobs are, one thing becomes clear quickly: spending time on strategic planning pays dividends. As busy as their weeks may feel, taking just an hour to prioritize tasks, highlight areas that need extra support, and plan meetings with their team members will make things flow more smoothly. So, if we’re all in agreement that this is crucial for the success of leaders, why are we not showing the future leaders around us how to do just that?

Boundless Kids works directly with tomorrow’s leaders to develop their leadership skills, help navigate life’s demands, and focus on the strategic planning component of shaping their future. For Josie Pacelli, an 11-year-old Boundless Kids member, strategic planning changed every aspect of her life and improved her ability to balance all the things—and people—that are most important to her.

“I’m always doing a lot at once,” Josie shared. “I’ve got sports, homework, friends, and family priorities, and before joining Boundless Kids, I was really struggling to balance it all.” As a stellar student, a committed friend, a star softball player, and, most importantly, a big sister, Josie felt the pressure. For a while, it felt like she was constantly playing catch-up, but in just 8 months of working with Katherine and the Boundless Kids Program, Josie learned how to set goals and focus her time. Now, she feels more balance in her life than ever before.

“I set goals to hang out with my friends more, practice softball regularly, improve in school, and spend more time with my family, especially my sisters,” she explained. Josie wasn’t seeing her friends or spending enough time with her sisters because of sports, but after a few goal-setting

sessions, everything clicked into place. “Even my parents have noticed that I’m getting along with my sisters better than I was,” Josie said with a laugh.

Although her strategy sessions with her mentor Katherine are one of the highlights of Boundless Kids, Josie loves the speaker sessions that provide new insights every month. “We did this one group session that was about a book about being unique, and I thought that was really cool. It was a good reminder to be proud of what makes me stand out and embrace who I want to be,” she shared.

Even some of the most experienced business leaders find it challenging to embrace their uniqueness and focus on the strategic aspects of achieving their goals. However, for Josie, these tasks are familiar and effortless, thanks to her experience with Boundless Kids. Now, no matter what she decides to do down the line—right now, she has her sights set on college softball and an engineering degree—she’ll be able to take a step back, prioritize her goals, and take the steps to make them a reality. Imagine if the adults running the world today started learning how to balance their priorities in the same way Josie does—the world would be a better place.

With future leaders getting empowered and finding themselves early on, the world will be a better place moving forward. 

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN YOUR KIDS LEARNING HOW TO CREATE A LEADERSHIP MINDSET?**

Check out our upcoming Boundless Kids Learning Series where we bring in experts to help the kids learn these critical life skills.

**BOUNDLESSKIDS.ORG/FORUMS**



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## Building Business Momentum After The Summer Slump:

# Start Now To Tackle Fall With These 5 Tips

BY MANDY BURAGE, PRESIDENT, PETRA COACH

**IF YOU** experience a business slump in the summertime, chances are you're not doing enough to get ahead of that slump. Waiting to regain momentum until the fall means that your organization misses out on 3-4 months of revenue gains. I know this because we've seen it with our business, too.

At Petra Coach, it took us a few years to realize this, but we were seeing a major downturn in business activity during the summer months. People are on vacation, spending time with their kids, and finally relaxing after a hectic first half of the year—they simply don't want to do a lot. That left us playing catch up when September rolled around, feeling more panic around what we did or didn't get done over the summer, and failing to maximize our organization's potential.

**IF YOU WAIT UNTIL FALL TO FIND MOMENTUM AFTER A SLOW SUMMER, YOU'RE TOO LATE.**



Instead, consider these five tips to head into fall with momentum—no matter how many PTO days your teams enjoyed during summer.

### CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN

After taking a look to understand where business lulls might exist for your organization, focus on making adjustments where you can actually have an impact. There's so much that even the best leaders can't control, but you know what we can control? Our effort and activity levels.

At Petra, we make a big push in April and May. Since summers slow down, we want to book new clients during the months before summer and use those bookings to maintain our momentum through the slower months.

If that momentum isn't happening organically, create an incentive for it! This can look like new-hire sign-on bonuses to bring in top talent in the spring, ramp them up quickly, and support them in driving growth and revenue ASAP. This can also look like offering new clients incentives such as discounts or access to special perks.

If you feel like there's nothing you can do to mitigate slow periods, then you're not getting creative enough.

### DISCIPLINE, DISCIPLINE, DISCIPLINE

One quote that everyone needs to hear is, "Tomorrow is a mystical land where 99% of all human productivity, motivation, and achievement is stored." Pushing things off until tomorrow, next week, or next quarter is the easy way out—it's lazy at best and negligent at worst. Get things done now. Dig deep, focus on finding discipline on a personal level and an organizational level, and you'll be amazed at what starts to take shape.

If we send an employee survey out with a two-week deadline for submission, 85%–90% of people will wait until the day before to complete it. The day before! If we wait on things that add to our to-do lists, work becomes a lot more overwhelming. But if we "just do it," we feel that sense of accomplishment and it drives more productivity.

The most successful people in the world do two to three times more than everyone else because they're disciplined. They don't let small tasks pile up and take over; they get things done quickly so they can focus on more strategic goals.

### ADJUST YOUR FOCUS TIMES

In the same way that some people are more productive during certain hours of the day, organizations will have their own natural rhythm—leaders just have to find that

rhythm. At Petra, we have quarterly leadership meetings for planning and strategy, but the meeting in the June/July timeframe is almost always impossible to plan.

Between summer schedules, holidays, and family commitments, we can't get 12 executives in a room. When we stopped making excuses and started capitalizing on our times with the highest productivity levels, our business transformed. Now, we have that meeting in May. It's a wide-open month and our leaders are able to give the session the time and focus it deserves.

### SET REALISTIC GOALS

Even with the best intentions, people often overcommit. We see it with clients, business partners, and even colleagues. Because of the pressure to produce, people take shortcuts instead of being honest about what's possible. One of my favorite playbook exercises is in place to challenge us on timelines and deliverables. It forces us to assess how much time we actually have to get something done.

It might look like you have 64 business days to complete a project, but when you take out the July 4th holiday, a week of vacation, and getting your kids back to school, you only have 54 days to work on it. This exercise creates a natural opportunity to scale back deliverables and set goals that leave everyone feeling accomplished.

### LEAN ON ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

If you can't hold yourself accountable, you'll fail. It's as simple as that. But since we're human, use tools to help drive accountability. These can look like accountable business partners, accountability dashboards, project tracking software, or even meeting mechanisms.

Every morning in our daily huddle, I announce to my team what my top task is for the day. If I say it out loud to everyone, I know I'll get it done. Accountability is an individual effort first, but it becomes a whole lot more powerful with the force of a group behind it.

### DON'T "FALL" INTO FALL—DIVE IN HEADFIRST

You can keep making excuses about why your business isn't doing well throughout the year, or you can take charge of the situation and make a change. I recommend the latter—do you have what it takes? 🏆

**GET IN TOUCH WITH MANDY AT  
[MANDY@PETRACOACH.COM](mailto:MANDY@PETRACOACH.COM)**



# YOU'RE DOING MEETINGS WRONG . . . AND HOW YOU CAN CHANGE THAT IN TWO WEEKS

BY TAYLOR SYKES, PETRA COACH

**WE HAVE** worked with organizational leaders at all levels in their companies, and they often have the same mindset: "If we do daily standups, shouldn't our team be aligned and productive?" While daily standups are helpful for a lot of reasons, they're designed to be quick updates and don't cover the big picture priorities.

So if something feels "off" within your team, it's time to change how you're managing it. At Petra Coach, we introduced Two-Week Top Task Meetings—aka, Two-Weekers—and everything changed. Then we had our clients implement these meetings and things changed for them, too. It turns out that productivity is a lot less about people's effort levels and a lot more about implementing the right support mechanisms within an organization.

## WHAT IS A TWO-WEEKER?

Designed to be 45–60 minutes long, Two-Weekers are regular meetings between team leaders and each person on their teams. These one-on-one meetings follow a unique structure that is meant to help teams stay focused, maintain alignment, and improve communication. Two-Weekers are the secret sauce to transforming your team's performance. Here's what they look like:

1. Start each meeting by confirming the date and time of the next two-week meeting. This reaffirms to both the team member and the leader that there is a mutual commitment to these meetings.
2. Catch up on personal and professional highs and lows that happened since the last meeting. This gives you a chance to center the conversation on development, make

personal connections, and offer support to your team members.

3. Review the individual's quarterly priorities. Score each priority with a red, yellow, or green status to get real about how things are going. This honest conversation helps drive course corrections and highlights roadblocks.
4. Revisit the top tasks from the last two-week meetings. Were these tasks completed? How did they go? Was anything learned?
5. Create the top tasks that should be worked on between this meeting and the next. Every team member should have 2–3 top tasks to focus on in two-week increments. This helps with prioritization, drowning out the noise of other happenings and putting the most important things at the forefront of your employees' minds.

## HOW IS A TWO-WEEKER DIFFERENT FROM OTHER REGULAR MEETINGS?

Managers are often walking a tightrope between delegation and micromanagement. We don't want our team members to feel like we don't trust them, but we also want to make sure that things are getting done well. Two-Weekers provide a platform that allows managers to feel connected to what's happening in their teams while empowering their team members to take ownership of key priorities.

With bigger, chunkier tasks, sometimes weekly touchpoints are actually too frequent to be valuable. We've all seen how fast a week can go, and when the day-to-day grind gets in the way of making progress on big projects, it can be

# “WITH BIGGER, CHUNKIER TASKS, SOMETIMES WEEKLY TOUCHPOINTS ARE ACTUALLY TOO FREQUENT TO BE VALUABLE.”



disheartening to show up to a weekly meeting without an update. But with two weeks to find time for strategic priorities, there's more of a chance to actually move the needle on top tasks.

## TWO-WEEKERS EMPOWER LEADERS, TOO

As a team leader myself, I've found that Two-Weekers completely changed the tone of how I collaborate with my team. Not only am I able to better understand how each person thinks, communicates, and prioritizes, but I'm in a position to challenge them to bring solutions to the table instead of giving them the answers. This helps me feel like something is being taken from my plate while ensuring my team feels like they are trusted to manage big, important tasks.

When leaders and team members establish a unified tone of shared improvement rather than criticism, they both enter a growth mindset. Once a growth mindset is achieved on both sides, they can support each other to become the best team players possible. Two-Weekers benefit everyone.

## TWO-WEEKER DO'S AND DON'TS

The effectiveness of these meetings stems from how they are approached and prioritized by all parties involved. Leaders often fall into the trap of moving meetings with their own team members first because it's often seen as "more convenient," but my approach is the opposite. I do everything in my power to not move these meetings because I want to set the tone that they're a priority—because they are!

When I take a step back and let my team members drive these meetings, it reinforces the idea that they are leading the charge with their two-week priorities, further solidifying the idea that they own important initiatives but are supported at every juncture. I spend a lot of time listening, answering questions when asked, and probing my teams for how they'd like me to help. I'm not there to prescribe answers but rather to let them chart the path ahead.

## TWO-WEEKERS CHANGE EVERYTHING

With the two-week meeting dynamic in full force, my team's performance conversations have completely transformed. Instead of getting annual feedback in performance reviews, they're getting feedback 25+ times per year, giving them a chance to course-correct and develop in this setting. When it finally clicks for

your team members that their futures are in their hands, everything starts to change. Productivity goes up, collaboration becomes second nature, and employee satisfaction shoots through the roof.

Your team may lack productivity now, and it's probably your fault. Don't panic; in a matter of weeks, that could completely change. Are you willing to put in the work? I'll check back in two weeks. 🤓



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# Feeling Financially Out Of Control? 8 Hard Truths About Business Finance That Leaders Aren't Hearing Enough

BY TERESA BAILEY, CFP®, CDFA®, PRESIDENT (NASHVILLE)/SENIOR WEALTH STRATEGIST,  
WADDELL & ASSOCIATES

**YOU CAN** be the world's best visionary with a cutting-edge entrepreneurial approach to solving an industry-wide problem, but if you can't manage money, your vision won't pay the bills. So many entrepreneurs and business leaders fall into the same trap thinking that as long as the product lives up to expectations, the rest will be smooth sailing. That couldn't be further from the truth.

Many business failures aren't about the product at all but, rather, the financial stability of the operation. In fact, 38% of business failures are due to exhausted cash reserves or a failure to secure additional capital. If your business is failing, it's probably because you're treating finance as an afterthought when it should be at the forefront of every conversation, discussion, and decision. In business, if you skip the financial legwork on the front end, you will fail.

You don't want to fail, right? Well, we don't want you to fail, either. But it is time for a reality check. Here are 8 hard truths about business finances that you're probably not thinking about:

## MINDSET MATTERS

We often use financial data as a tool to remove personal beliefs or biases from decision-making in business, but that doesn't mean that your mindset around money doesn't have an impact on those "cold, hard numbers." If you are coming from a place of stress, anxiety, or scarcity when making financial decisions, the analysis you're doing will come from a place of fear and scarcity, too. A clear head and a calm nervous system can actually pay dividends in this scenario!

## YOU HAVE TO PUT THE WORK IN

Financial health isn't something that takes shape overnight. Just like your physical health, it's something you have to invest in. If you skip the gym and eat at McDonald's every day, you aren't going to reach your health goals. If you don't set financial goals, work toward them on a daily basis, and measure your progress over time, your business will fail.

## KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

It doesn't matter if you got bad math grades all through school and still did okay in the end; as a business owner, you must know your finances at a detailed level. When you face a surprise obstacle or an uncertain business environment, reacting quickly and effectively is key. If you're spending time aiming to get updated on "Business Finance 101" during a high-stress time, you might miss the window to avoid financial upset.

## HIRE TO YOUR WEAKNESSES

Let's say you've gotten to a place where you feel very comfortable when it comes to discussing the financial matters of your business—congrats! You've done the bare minimum. If you're not someone who can work in the weeds of transactions or pull together actionable insights from the data you have access to, hire someone who can! Investing in the right people and tools that can get you clean, clear data in a way that makes sense to you is invaluable to your business.

## ACCOUNTABILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY

If your finances are slipping, you're probably lacking focus, discipline, or a combination of the two. Even the most intense bodybuilders will tell you that focus and discipline don't always come easily. So, what do exercise gurus do when they're not feeling disciplined? Rely on an accountability buddy or coach of some sort. Getting in front of your finances is a long journey, and if you feel like you're lagging at any point, it might be time to hire a coach. At W&A, we team up with Petra Coaches who help us dive into specifics—finance, sourcing, etc.—while still helping you understand the big picture.

## TECHNOLOGY IS YOUR SUPERPOWER ...

... but it can also be your biggest downfall. When it comes to business technology, especially fintech, finding the right tools is absolutely vital. You'll hear a lot of noise from SaaS providers about how their tool is the best and can solve all your problems and more, but only you really know what will work for your organization. The system should align with how you think about numbers and integrate into your current ecosystem well. If it doesn't, it's just a shiny new piece of junk that you spent money on.

## LACK OF TRAINING IS CRIPPLING

When using a new technology to address financial gaps in your organization, training your people on that technology is the most important thing you can do. If you lose buy-in from the people who are meant to use the tool simply because they don't understand it, the financial impact will be a lot bigger than you realize. You could lose employees,

miss out on key client contracts, and even fall into failure—all because you didn't take the time to train your people! Don't let this be your story.

## DON'T IGNORE PERSONAL FINANCES

It's no secret that business owners with healthier personal finances tend to have better control of their business finances. It goes back to that quote, "How you do anything is how you do everything." If your personal finances are reflective of your poor financial hygiene, that stench will flow through to your business.

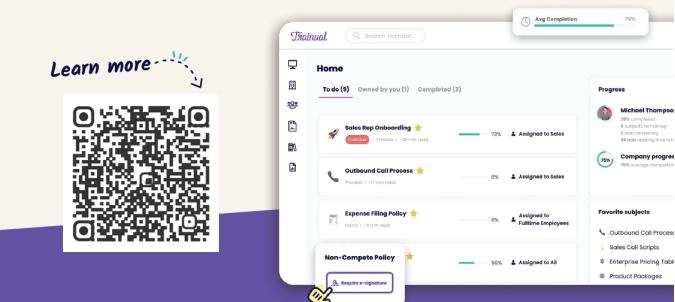
## MONEY TALKS

There's nothing flashy or fun about business finance, but you know what's even less flashy and fun? Bankruptcy. That's what's waiting on the other side of any laziness you may have around the financial aspects of bringing your vision to life. Now is not the time to panic. Now is the time to hit the metaphorical finance gym, establish a healthy routine, and commit to that routine with unmatched focus. 

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# THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IS FAILING ITS STUDENTS; NOLA EDUCATION AND PETRA ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO GET MORE TEENS TO GRADUATION

BY JOHN ALVENDIA, CEO, NOLA EDUCATION





**FOR THE** 2022-23 school year, public school officials estimated that 49% of their students started the year behind grade-level proficiency in at least one academic subject. Year after year, as students move to new grades, those instances of being behind compound, putting immense pressure on that individual's academic performance. Statistically, students who come from low-income families have the hardest time succeeding in the education system. In fact, students from low-income families are seven times more likely to drop out than their peers who live in higher-income households.

Overburdened and under-resourced, the public school system in America isn't doing enough—quite frankly, can't do enough—to help struggling students catch up to their peers. The system needs help, and that's where NOLA Education comes in. With roots as far back as 20 years, we offer students a hands-on learning opportunity called Star Academy.

We set up a school-within-a-school program to serve the most at-risk population around the country. We focus on middle schoolers who are on a path toward dropping out. We put them in Star Academy and help them get back on track for graduation. After working as a sales rep for the parent company of Star Academy for over a decade, I recognized greater potential for the program and founded NOLA Education, LLC in 2018 to acquire it.

Since then, the demand for our program has skyrocketed. COVID-19 exacerbated an overextended school system, and two years of online or hybrid schooling set students back even further. In just a few years, we went from a company of six people to an organization of 34. Managing scale at that level is never easy, but when it needs to be sustainable enough to support the next generation's education, there's no room for error. To be able to scale at the speed students needed, I knew I had to enlist the help of someone whose main focus was on scaling companies and could also coach my internal team to maintain organizational health. I found Petra Coach and never looked back.

### THE SECRET TO SCALE

For years, Petra Coach has been challenging businesses to do things differently. With a proprietary process that business leaders can lean on and professional business coaches who are there every step of the way, Petra Coach helps businesses rethink their operations, provide new value to their customers, and—especially in NOLA Education's case—scale at an impressive yet sustainable pace.

It was the need to scale that initially put Petra on my radar. After our booming growth, I found myself challenged by how to structure the business moving forward. I started asking around to some of the people

in my Entrepreneurs' Organization, trying to get their insight on how to scale. Erik Frank—a Petra Coach—came up as someone I should reach out to, and as soon as he shared his approach to scaling, business execution, and moderating my teams internally, I knew we needed his expertise.

Now, my team at NOLA Education partners with Petra Coach on quarterly planning sessions, strategy discussions, and more. Erik serves as a business coach and moderator who has a helpful roadmap for scaling up. He has become an integral part of structuring the organization and supporting its growth. Every step of the way, our growth path—which most companies don't experience—becomes clearer and clearer. Having the cumulative experience of Petra has been very beneficial to us and to struggling students around the nation.

### FINDING YOUR FOOTING IN A NEW APPROACH

A new approach to anything will take some time to get right, but after years of working with Petra, I fully recognize the benefits. We're much more structured and focused, and my management team is very confident in the advice we get. With a fairly flat organization, I had to get creative with my company's structure—and fast. Now, there's an additional group of managers in the organization, and the team members own the company priorities, moving the ownership for success from the executive team to the entire organization.

But these changes haven't just made an impact inside NOLA Education; they're changing the level of support students are getting, too. We're getting a lot of great feedback from the states that we're in, which is making it easier to expand to other schools and help more students. We work with the government to get funded, and as we grow, I'll know better where to focus our efforts and investments.

Petra Coach has a reputation for shaking things up and challenging the status quo, and when you think about it, it's not all that different from what NOLA Education does in our respective space. With Star Academy, students that have been left behind can access hands-on learning modules that help them catch up to their friends through engaging lessons they actually want to do. In the same way that NOLA Education trusts the Petra Process, students around the United States are learning to trust the Star Academy process and are seeing the results that come along with it.

I have no intention of discontinuing our work with Petra. I'm a better leader for it, my team is more effective because of it, and our students have even brighter futures now.

**Visit [StarAcademyProgram.com](http://StarAcademyProgram.com) to learn more.**

# HOW TO BECOME THE BRAND CUSTOMERS CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT

BY JOHN DIJULIUS, CHIEF REVOLUTION OFFICER, THE DIJULIUS GROUP

**WHAT IF** I told you that, today, I am going to review all your personal spending for the last year? I will look at your credit card statements, check your bank statements, etc. And tomorrow, I am going to tell you one brand you can never do business with again—ever! Which brand would you be worried about that I would take away from you? The more critical question is . . . Why?

When I ask my audiences this question, the same brands always get mentioned: Apple, Starbucks, Nordstrom, and Amazon, besides local mom-and-pop shops. Now, what have they done and what do they consistently do to make you so loyal and feel you cannot live without them? Usually, they are not the cheapest, most convenient, or head and shoulders above their competition in quality.

Being a brand many customers can't live without is power. That is brand loyalty. The more people you can make feel like they cannot live without your brand, the closer you are to making price irrelevant. Here are the key deciding factors to being a business that people cannot live without:

- 1. Great service/products**
- 2. Consistency**
- 3. Ease of doing business**
- 4. Employee evangelists**
- 5. Educate versus sell**
- 6. Personalized experiences**

## 1. GREAT SERVICE/PRODUCT

This is a given. It is the price of admission that your product or service better be damn good. However, this is typically not listed in the top three reasons people love a brand. A company is in trouble if it relies on its product or service to differentiate itself in its market. Today, every product or service is eventually commoditized.



## 2. CONSISTENCY

This is huge and cannot be overemphasized. More than anything else, customers want brands to be brilliant at the basics. Forget the bells and whistles—just be consistent, reliable, accurate, and friendly in every interaction. Don't make it dependent on which location or which employee your customer deals with.

## 3. EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

Think about Amazon, Zappos, Nordstrom, and Uber. Amazon is the easiest and most convenient company for purchasing, from one-click to returns to their customer support. Companies like Zappos and Nordstrom do not have return policies. Bring it back in a year; you don't need your receipt. Does your company have policies and rules to make your customer's life more convenient? How easy is it to speak to a human being? How easy is it to find a phone number on your website? Is the buying experience convenient for your customers, or your company?

## 4. EMPLOYEE EVANGELISTS

Great brands have employee evangelists of two things: 1) what they do, and 2) the brand they do it for. When you shop at world-class brands, you see a strong similarity. Their employees love the product, love helping and discussing the benefits of different types of products, and they love working for that brand.

## 5. EDUCATE VERSUS SELL

The best brands teach their employees to educate customers versus sell to them. I love technology, and the moment something new is released, I must have it (the worst thing a consumer can do). Once, when Apple released a new iPad, I ran into the Apple store to upgrade. When the Apple employee asked me what I wanted, I said, "I currently have the iPad, but I want the iPad 2."

He could not have had an easier sale. However, he asked me what I used my iPad for. I said, "For email, surfing the internet, social media, and I read articles and books on it." He said, "Do you play games or watch movies?" I replied, "No, never." He said, "Don't get it. It won't be worth it. The big difference between the iPad and iPad 2 is the resolution you would only appreciate if you played games or watched movies."

I couldn't believe he talked me out of spending \$500. I was actually bummed! I said, "Well, maybe I will start playing games." Now I would have bought anything

in the store from this employee after that. He wasn't about selling me but educating me and ensuring I spent my money wisely.

## 6. PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCES

Every regular customer at Starbucks has "their order." It is unique from anyone else's. It is usually long and complicated, like a "grande, single shot, 4 pumps sugar-free peppermint, nonfat, extra hot, no foam, light whip, stirred white mocha." Did you know there are over 80,000 ways to order your Starbucks drink? It is options like this that allows each customer to have a personalized experience curated just for them.

## BECOME THE BRAND CUSTOMERS CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT

Review the six things that make a company a brand that customers cannot live without. Do an audit of how your company fares in the six categories, see where you can improve, and create a strategy that helps you become the brand your customers can't live without. 



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# WORDS MATTER: Turn People On Or Off With Your Words

BY ANDY BUYTING, FOUNDER/CEO, TULIP MEDIA GROUP

I VISITED your company website today. I spent less than ten seconds on your home page and then exited the browser altogether. I was bored before I even got a sense of what you offer. In fact, I still don't know what you offer. And I'm not the only one. On average, people spend only seconds on a website before they decide to invest more time or leave. This means businesses have a very short window to capture their customers' attention and give them a reason to stick around.

Setting your brand and your company apart requires some risk. Be controversial. Take a stand. Be vulnerable. Be intentional. My advice? If you really want to stand out and create a company that scales in the marketplace, stop competing to be better. Instead, compete to be different.

Let me show you how.



## EARLY LESSONS IN BRANDING

The most important things I learned about business, I learned from my parents. When I was still a teenager, my dad took me to a business conference with him.

At the conference, one of the keynote speakers was a marketer who asked the audience, "How many people spend time thinking about different radio stations they're going to place ad spots with?" Everyone in the room raised their hands. Even as a teen, I knew how much time my dad spent thinking about radio advertising.

Then, the marketer asked, "How many of you write your own ads for those coveted radio spots?" Every. Single. Hand. Dropped. Today, the very same phenomenon happens. Business owners are so focused on what types of ads to



## “IT’S HARD TO PLEASE EVERYONE, SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL TAKE A STAND FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN AND SOLIDIFY BRAND LOYALTY WITH THOSE WHO RESPECT YOUR STANCE. ”

spend their money on that they forget to invest the same care into the most important part—the message itself!

### BEING A GOOD BUSINESS OWNER DOES NOT MAKE YOU A GOOD MARKETER

Every business owner is passionate about what they're selling; they won't survive in the world of entrepreneurship if not. But being a good business owner is not the same thing as being a good marketer. When people visit your website, they don't know about how good of a business owner you are. They don't know how you invest in your staff. They don't know how you support your community. All they see is the content that's in front of them, and you better make sure it tells them what they need to hear and is interesting enough to capture their attention.

### BOLD ENOUGH TO BE DIFFERENT? YOU'VE GOT OPTIONS

There are plenty of ways to get potential customers thinking, ignite a certain reaction, or create conversation. Here are some approaches you can employ today.

#### FOCUS ON THE FEELING

When I'm working with new clients, one of the things I ask them to define is the feeling they want their consumers to experience. For a sweater manufacturer, it might be comfort. For an outdoor brand, adventure is often the target. Have you figured out how you want to make people feel yet? If not, you're not tapping into humanity's biggest sense of connection—emotion.

#### RAGE-BAITING

Rage-baiting is a hot topic among marketers today. When you scroll through TikTok, chances are you'll see some form of rage-baiting within the first handful of videos you watch. The methodology varies, but this form of marketing tries to pull on feelings of anger or frustration to get people to interact. It could be something as simple as pronouncing a word wrong, baiting the language lovers who just can't resist commenting a correction.

### TAKING A STAND FOR BRAND VALUES

For so long, brands were warned against speaking out on controversial topics. Religion, politics, and everything in between was off the table. But maybe it's time to put it back on the table. Today, 82% of consumers feel it's important that the brands they support align with their personal values. It's hard to please everyone, so you might as well take a stand for what you believe in and solidify brand loyalty with those who respect your stance.

### DON'T BE AFRAID OF CONTROVERSY—WE'VE ALL SEEN IT WORK!

If you still think I'm crazy for championing controversy, take a look at another company that benefited from being a bit polarized. And hey, even if you think I'm crazy, you're still reading, right? So maybe controversy does work.

In an iconic move, especially in 2008, Domino's Pizza completely revamped its recipe after massive dips in customer satisfaction. The campaign that came along with the rebrand was the "Sorry We Suck" campaign, and it even featured a commercial with the CEO at the time admitting that the pizza his company made "sucked." This change got people's interest, convinced them to try the new recipe, and paid off for Domino's. In the year following the campaign, the pizza chain saw profits double.

### BEING BETTER < BEING DIFFERENT

More than ever, your words matter. Finding the right words to drown out the noise of your competitors and other advertisers in the minds of consumers can be very difficult, but one of the surefire ways to stay memorable is to stay controversial. When you swap being "better" for being "different," you're giving consumers a fresh way to connect with your brand, and one that they'll remember a lot more.

Oh, and the next time I visit your website, I better get more out of it than I did this time around. 

GET IN TOUCH WITH ANDY AT  
[ANDY@TULIPMEDIAGROUP.COM](mailto:ANDY@TULIPMEDIAGROUP.COM)



# Your Fragile Mindset Isn't Just Holding You Back, It's Holding **EVERYONE** Back

BY ANDY BAILEY, FOUNDER, PETRA COACH

**AS A** society, we've latched onto this idea of resiliency: let everything roll off your back, don't absorb the feedback, and continue on with your life. But let's be real—that's a copout. Resiliency isn't a bad trait, but it certainly isn't helping anyone move the needle forward. What we really need to be focused on is becoming anti-fragile.

Anti-fragility is a step up from resiliency. Instead of letting external input that you may disagree with bounce off of the shields you have up to guard your ego, what if you let it in, processed it, and used it as a catalyst for change? If I get feedback as a leader that I'm not supporting one of my team members in a certain way, I have two choices: ignore the feedback and dismiss the uncomfortable reality or face it head-on and use it to become a better leader.

Fragility is holding everyone back. Relationships, businesses, communities, and everything in between gets frozen if people like you and me can't change our mindsets. When we all agree to explore different ideas, accept those ideas, and move forward despite differences, our worlds—individually and collectively—open up.



## “FRAGILITY IS HOLDING EVERYONE BACK. RELATIONSHIPS, BUSINESSES, COMMUNITIES, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN GETS FROZEN IF PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME CAN’T CHANGE OUR MINDSETS. ”

### WILLINGNESS TO EXPLORE “DIFFERENT”

To many people today, the 1950s feels like a very “set in our ways” time in history. People were unwilling to listen, unwilling to understand different perspectives, and definitely unwilling to change. While we may think we’re better today, we’re still incredibly resistant to anything different. Your social media algorithm feeds you videos you agree with, your friends probably parrot your views, and your communities are insulated from discomfort.

Being able to look outside of your own viewpoint is the first step to changing your mindset. We have to open up our conversations, open up our interactions, and remind ourselves that the homogenous feedback we receive from different sources in our lives is limiting us and everyone around us.

### ACCEPTANCE OF DIFFERENT

Once we get to a place where we can explore different viewpoints, converse with people who are polar opposites, and appreciate that different paths are going to lead to different places, we have to be willing to accept those differences. You don’t have to love the color that your neighbor paints his or her house, but you do have to accept it—it’s their house! Fighting against different is a losing battle every single time, and there are much better ways to spend your energy.

### WILLINGNESS TO MOVE FORWARD

Okay, so you’ve explored different and accepted it—now what? Now move along! I see so many people get paralyzed by differences or paralyzed by the thought of accepting those differences that they fail to learn and grow, negatively impacting their own lives and the world around them. When we get comfortable with being uncomfortable and learn to move through that discomfort, we can level up our personal lives and professional lives.

### THE SEAL LESSON WE ALL NEED

We see the power of mindset shifts in a lot of settings, but one of the most illustrative examples is Navy SEAL

training. SEALs come from all socioeconomic backgrounds, education levels, religions, and belief systems, but after the trials and tribulations of intense, grueling training and tests, they confront their differences, become anti-fragile, and move forward a hundred times stronger individually and a thousand times stronger as a team.

It’s not that they let the drown test—having their arms and legs bound, jumping into a pool, and bobbing in the water for five minutes before swimming to safety—roll off their backs. Instead, they feel the impact, embrace the different, and move forward stronger. Now that is anti-fragility.

### GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH DIFFERENT

I’m not asking anyone to risk their lives or jump into treacherous waters. There are a lot of ways to get comfortable with the different that exist around us. One of my favorite ways is by reading books. I challenge myself to pick up 3-4 books every year that make me think, “Well, that’s bullshit” when I look at the cover. I read them, I understand new perspectives, and often, these books help me transform how I move through the world and interact with people around me.

### ANTI-FRAGILITY TEACHES YOU TO CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

Our world today protects us from different when, in reality, the best thing to do is to embrace it. When you’re able to explore the different, accept it, and move forward, transformation happens. Cultivating an anti-fragile mindset teaches you to focus on controlling what you can control. If you understand that differences exist all around us, and accepting those differences comes with empowerment, you stop seeing yourself as a victim of circumstance and start building your own future from here on out.

Get out of your own way, and everyone else’s way, too! The world will be better for it. 🏆

GET IN TOUCH WITH ANDY AT  
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# CONTROLLING WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

## BUILDING A STRONG COMPANY CULTURE

BY ARNIE MALHAM, BETTERBOOKCLUB



**IN THE** dynamic world of business, where uncertainty is the only constant, the concept of controlling what you can control emerges as a guiding principle for fostering a resilient and thriving company culture. As the founder of cj Advertising, Legal Intake Professionals, and BetterBookClub, I've witnessed firsthand the transformative power of this philosophy in shaping organizational success. In this article, I delve into how a focus on controllable factors can drive positive change within companies.

At the core of this principle lies the recognition that attempting to control what lies beyond our grasp only leads to chaos and undermines the fabric of our culture. Instead, I advocate for a shift in mindset towards setting up robust systems and empowering individuals to operate within predefined guardrails. By relinquishing the need for micromanagement and embracing a culture of trust, leaders can channel their energies towards strategic endeavors that propel the company forward.

Building a strong company culture begins with four key actions: hiring the right people, teaching them about the company culture, rewarding them for good work, and showing good behavior from the top down. From meticulous hiring processes that prioritize cultural fit to comprehensive onboarding programs that immerse new team members in our ethos, every step plays a vital role in nurturing a purposeful culture. Equally important is the reinforcement of desired behaviors through recognition and reward mechanisms, coupled with unwavering consistency in actions that mirror our espoused values.

Central to our philosophy is the belief that when employees are entrusted with autonomy within a well-defined framework, they become more invested in their work and demonstrate higher levels of productivity and collaboration. The longevity of employee tenure serves as a tangible metric reflecting the strength of

our organizational culture where individuals thrive in an environment conducive to growth and fulfillment.

However, navigating the terrain of controllable factors is not without its challenges. Organizations often fixate on outliers, diverting attention away from systemic solutions. Addressing this challenge requires a shift in focus towards resolving issues directly and fostering open communication channels that encourage dialogue and problem solving at the root level.

In times of adversity and volatility, the true test of our company culture emerges. Staying true to our core values and making principled decisions that uphold the integrity of our organization is paramount. By proactively preparing for contingencies and rehearsing response strategies, we can instill confidence and resilience within our teams, guiding them through turbulent times with clarity and purpose.

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of business, the mission of BetterBookClub serves as a beacon of inspiration. Through the promotion of reading and continuous self-improvement, we empower employees to make autonomous choices and expand their horizons. By fostering a culture of learning and growth within our organizations, we lay the foundation for long-term success and sustainability.

In conclusion, controlling what we can control is not just a mantra—it's a guiding principle that shapes our approach to business and leadership. By embracing this philosophy, we can build strong and resilient company cultures that stand the test of time. 🌟

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# AI RESHAPES AND REAFFIRMS HUMAN CONNECTION IN COMPLEX B2B SALES

BY EMERSE

# EMERSE

**IN THE** late 20th century, sales was predominantly a game of personal relationships and face-to-face negotiations. The salesperson's toolkit was limited to phone calls, in-person meetings, and the occasional fax.

Fast forward to the present day, and the digital revolution has rewritten the rulebook—and the playbook! The advent of the internet, followed by the explosion of social media and mobile technology, has expanded the sales horizon far beyond traditional boundaries.

The world of sales is undergoing a seismic shift. Technology, coupled with globalization and changing consumer behaviors, has introduced a new layer of complexity and competition into the sales environment.

A report by McKinsey & Company highlighted that B2B sales leaders have seen video conferencing and remote sales interactions become more than just a necessity; they've become a preferred method, with over 75% of buyers and sellers expressing a desire to continue with remote human interactions or digital self-service due to their convenience and effectiveness.

Beyond the remote revolution, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has swiftly become a cornerstone technology across most industries, marking a new era of operational and strategic innovation. Its rapid adoption reflects not just a trend but a fundamental shift in how businesses approach problem-solving, customer engagement, and decision-making processes.



Today, sales professionals operate in an environment where digital communication, data analytics, and understanding the global market are just as critical as the traditional handshake once was.

## THE IMPACT AND PLACE OF AI IN COMPLEX B2B SALES

### AI AS AN AUGMENTATION TOOL

In this new era, AI emerges not as a threat but as a significant ally. AI's capacity to enhance the capabilities of sales professionals, especially in complex B2B scenarios, is unprecedented. Emerse Sales, recognizing AI early on, has integrated it to refine analytics, deepen customer insights, and personalize outreach.

Some use cases for AI include the following:

- Predictive Analytics for Lead Scoring
- Personalized Customer Interaction
- Automated Customer Service
- Prospect Research
- Almost any other tedious, repetitive task that takes up the time your salespeople could spend interacting with human customers.

Obviously, the integration of AI into your sales systems will come with its own set of challenges that need to be tackled head-on:

**Data Privacy And Security:** Businesses must implement robust data protection measures and comply with relevant regulations to safeguard customer data.

**Resistance To Change:** "Old school" sales teams may be skeptical of adopting AI tools. Offering comprehensive training and highlighting the complementary nature of AI is crucial. Emphasizing its role in augmenting human capabilities rather than replacing them will help get your team on board.

**Integration With Existing Systems:** Choose AI solutions that offer compatibility with your existing platforms, or consider investing in integrations that ensure a smooth transition.

As we approach these challenges and harness the power of AI, a crucial next step is to ensure that you nurture the marriage of technology that enhances operational efficiency and the personal connections that deepen trust.

## BUILDING TRUST IN SALES

We firmly believe in the notion of sales not being a transaction but rather a transfer of trust. AI assists in laying this foundation by automating data-heavy tasks and delivering insights. Yet, the sales professional's empathy, understanding, and genuine connection with clients cement long-lasting relationships.

The first thing that comes to mind for many when working with sales technology is the "obviously automated" cold messaging one might receive in their email or LinkedIn inbox. This can erode trust as opposed to build it. For that reason, it's important to continuously monitor and refine your AI systems based on feedback and outcomes and ensure that AI-assisted interactions are supplemented with opportunities for real, personal engagement.

A balanced approach reinforces the message that AI enhances the sales process. The human element—our ability to interpret emotions, understand complex needs, and build rapport—simply cannot be replicated by algorithms or large language models.

## STRENGTHENING THE SALES PLAYBOOK WITH TECHNOLOGY

Emerse Sales has continuously evolved its approach to creating sales playbooks by harnessing the latest technological advancements, including AI. This adaptability allows sales teams to remain agile, enhancing their ability to understand client needs and effectively respond to market dynamics.

Fathom's AI scripting capability records our Boot Camps and provides an output that significantly contributes to the construction of our Quick Start Playbook. These recordings and their subsequent scripts are instrumental in building a

playbook that is both dynamic and highly tailored to meet the current market needs.

Furthermore, Loom's recent addition of "scripting" services allows our team to generate AI-constructed scripts based on video recordings. This feature enables us to craft precise and impactful sales communications, further enriching our playbook content with real-life, engaging scenarios.

Integrating these technologies allows organizations to mine vast amounts of data, ensuring that their strategies are not just relevant but also offer a competitive edge in today's fast-paced market.

## COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE AND MARKET RESEARCH

To stay current, businesses should leverage AI for real-time market analysis and competitive landscape analysis. Tools such as Perplexity.ai can conduct detailed research and provide reliable sources of information. This ongoing influx of information allows sales teams to swiftly adapt strategies and understand market shifts, ultimately empowering them to preempt and respond better to client needs.

## SCENARIO PLANNING FOR GO-TO-MARKET STRATEGIES

In today's dynamic business environment, scenario planning has become essential. Emerse uses AI and data analytics to forecast various go-to-market scenarios, preparing for diverse market conditions and customer responses. This foresight and flexibility ensure that Emerse and its clients can pivot quickly, securing resilience and growth despite the uncertainty of operating a business in the 2020s.

## THE HUMAN ELEMENT IS STILL THE FUTURE OF SALES

As we look toward the future, it's clear that the essence of sales lies not in technology alone but in the human connections that drive our industry. AI and other technologies offer powerful tools, but the irreplaceable value of trust, empathy, and genuine relationships remains paramount.

While AI reshapes how sales professionals engage with clients, it simultaneously amplifies the need for genuine human engagement, ensuring that sales strategies remain customer-centric and deeply rooted in understanding and meeting client needs.

As we embrace this integrated approach, we must reaffirm our commitment to the human principles of sales. If your business aims to rush toward digitization, the one thing you should not forget is that the essence of sales remains grounded in the profound connections between people. ♦

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# IDENTIFYING & IMPLEMENTING HEALTHY HABITS IN 2024

## THE YEAR OF TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR WELL-BEING

BY OKSANA EBERARD, WELL-BEING  
STRATEGIST, MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION  
COACH, SPEAKER, AND AUTHOR



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**IF YOU'VE** felt unbalanced, unregulated, or just generally distracted recently, it's not just you. It's the modern times we live in. Between the constant inundation of technology and a hustle mentality that is so deeply ingrained in our culture, many of us (if not nearly all of us) feel like we're constantly running on empty. Although it takes time, dedication, and often facing uncomfortable truths to overcome this state, you must realize that it is possible and within your reach to live a fulfilling, joyful life. Here's what you need to know about identifying and implementing healthy habits in 2024 to take control of your well-being and live your best life.

### DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

Firstly, it's important to recognize why you're feeling so disconnected or distracted in the first place. A common reason is, of course, technology. Cellphones, computers, and screens in general remain one of the most influential sources of productivity, opportunities, and enhancements, but also of distraction. It's so commonplace to get lost in the world of social media and entertainment these days that we've even made up new words to reflect these experiences, like doomsscrolling and binge-watching. Shifting our use of technology to be more about work and less about entertainment purposes could make all the difference here.

Beyond the constant drain of technology that we're subject to, another reason for running on empty is the ongoing persistence of hyper-productivity. It's a widely accepted and practiced socio-cultural phenomena of today's world. As a result, we're severely lacking the

emotional regulation and processing skills needed to address or explore our well-being. Unfortunately, addressing your inner emotions requires slowing down and asking yourself the hard questions, something many people don't recognize as being critical to well-being. People feel a lot of things these days, but without the proper opportunities and time to process our emotions, we're left in a mix of internal confusion and distraction.

### **GET COMFORTABLE BEING UNCOMFORTABLE**

Though it may sound paradoxical, the key to moving through these feelings is to allow yourself to sit with them and explore them, which is the core of mindfulness. It requires time and courage. I believe that if more people allowed themselves to feel, we could have more actions taken toward positive, sustainable changes. But the "problem" is that mindfulness stimulates self-awareness, which is why some people don't like practicing it. Once they see and feel how unbalanced, confused, and unfocused they really are, they don't like it. They feel as if their mindfulness practice did that. But that's how they operate every day, and distraction becomes an easy solution to get numb again.

The first step to overcoming these distracting habits is cultivating self-awareness. You can only change what you are aware of. How can you identify habits that are detrimental to your focus and well-being? Ask yourself this simple question: Does the habit add balance and energy to your life or deplete it? And sometimes, all it takes is a small shift in the timing of the habit or practice to get the full benefit of it. For example, personally, working out in the mornings is not a good thing for me. I've noticed that when I do, I feel tired and sleepy later in the morning and into the afternoon. But once I shifted my workout to the early afternoon, it became a beautiful, energizing practice.

### **CLARIFY THE CONFUSION**

If you're sitting there like, "My problems run deeper than just pushing my workout to the afternoon," your concerns are completely valid. Here's what you can do. For starters, I would suggest tracking the time you spend on all your activities throughout the day and the results they bring (whether desired or a distraction). Though a time-consuming exercise, the value on investment is huge. Tracking these activities will help you determine what areas of your life you're focusing on unnecessarily so you can hopefully strike a better balance. Another suggestion would be to prioritize three things to accomplish each day. Personally, I love this one because it makes me feel accomplished and motivated, plus it helps me focus on exactly what I need to achieve.

Lastly, and this is a big one, leave white space in your schedule for unfocused activities and spontaneous creative thinking. The brain needs both focused and unfocused

time to function at optimal capacity. Put another way, if we constantly aim to bring only more focus into our lives, the fatigue sets in, and we feel burnt out by the end of the day. Unfortunately, many "unfocused" activities like going for a walk, cooking a meal, or chatting with a friend about nothing are considered distractions or time-wasting activities in today's business world. I would argue these experiences are essential to recharge your focus. When we have the space to think about things, more efficient and creative solutions have the possibility to emerge.

### **YOUR FUTURE SELF WILL THANK YOU**

If you're looking to prioritize healthy habits in 2024, you first need to do an internal exploration and determine what habits sustain your health, well-being, and joy in the long term. Sit with your uncomfortable emotions. Incorporate a daily mindfulness practice to increase your self-awareness and determine exactly what you need. Next, create a foundation so that healthy living does not need to be an effort anymore—it's who you are. Remember to give yourself grace and time; it takes longer than you'd think to establish new habits.

Specifically for 2024, I would prioritize any sort of movement, especially if it is bilateral (dancing, aerobics, gym workouts, and swimming, for example). Movement helps emotional processing through the regulation of hormones and is foundational to every person's overall well-being. And another big one is sleep. Recent studies suggest that women need 1-2 more hours of sleep than men, meaning women need 9-10 hours while men require the traditional 8. I just need to say this: sleep is not a waste of time! It's an essential part of health restoration, and yet it's something that many people in today's world don't get enough of.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Ultimately, if this all sounds too overwhelming, I want you to focus on the value of investment. By value, I mean giving time and energy to things that bring you sustainable levels of joy, contentment, fulfillment, engagement, and connection in your life. In my world, these activities are meditation, proper breathing practices, emotional regulation, my relationship with my family, and my connection with nature. The hard truth is that we have become so dysregulated as a society that it's been normalized to be constantly running on fumes. What we're missing in all this hustle and bustle are the moments of calm, the times to reconnect with ourselves, and the small glimmers of joy throughout our day. 🌟

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# STOP WASTING WISDOM

## THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM IS RELYING ON YOU!

BY CHIP CONLEY, FOUNDER/CEO AT MEA, BEST-SELLING AUTHOR, SPEAKER

**WE ALL** need coaches and mentors. Mentors have gotten me through some of the most trying times of my career, and coaches have helped me soar in business. If the Warren Buffets and Bill Gateses of the world coach others, then why wouldn't you?

Despite knowing how important coaches were early in my career, I lost touch with the importance of coaching others as I became a more seasoned entrepreneur. It wasn't until a happenstance reminder helped show me how vital mentoring and coaching is at all career stages. It's not just for industry titans; it's for everyone, no matter how long they've been building their careers.

We've oversimplified coaching and mentorship to be something that helps people "get ahead," but in reality, it is the foundation that upholds the entrepreneurial ecosystem that is responsible for driving innovation and progress around the world.

During my time as the Head of Global Hospitality and Strategy at Airbnb, I got the opportunity to participate in the company's intergenerational mentoring programs as a "modern elder." I noticed that there were so many midlife professionals who still had so much to give the world but

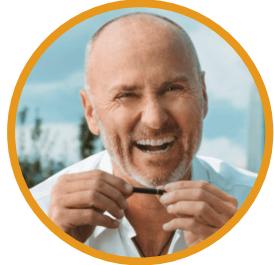


who had no idea where to focus their efforts. Mentoring helped my colleagues find their footing in their careers, and it also helped me get back in touch with mine.

As I examined my own relationship with mentoring, I knew that many other "modern elders" were struggling with their own momentum in their careers, so I founded an organization that's designed to help adults find the wisdom that leads them through their midlife era, reminding them that no goals are too lofty. In my most recent entrepreneurial journey to start Modern Elder Academy, my entire understanding of the world of mentoring and coaching others has shifted for the better.

### THE VALUE OF JOURNEY SHARING

Every entrepreneur is intimately familiar with failure. We've all bombed board meetings, forgotten important pitch materials, or taken a chance on something that didn't pan out. Our willingness to keep moving through those failures is what ultimately turns us into successful entrepreneurs or jobless couch surfers. Now that I'm one of the "elder" entrepreneurs, nothing brings me more joy than sharing some of my biggest failures with other go-getters who feel like they're failing.



## “ WHETHER YOU’VE RECENTLY SOLD YOUR BUSINESS OR STILL INVOLVED IN BUSINESS, SHARING YOUR JOURNEY AND EXPERIENCES—BOTH SUCCESSES AND FAILURES—IS INCREDIBLY VALUABLE TO OTHERS. ”

Whether you've recently sold your business or still involved in business, sharing your journey and experiences—both successes and failures—is incredibly valuable to others.

### HERE ARE THE BEST RETURNS I GET FROM MENTORING OTHERS:

#### A PUSH TO MAKE SENSE OF IT ALL

You've probably heard the saying, "The best teachers are great learners." For me, that idea comes up time and time again in coaching others. When sharing my experiences with other entrepreneurs, I'm forced to make sense of them in a different way than I do when I'm just thinking about them. In order to impart wisdom and learnings from all I've gone through, I have to process it in a new way. Coaching helps me do that.

#### KARMIC CAPITALISM

What comes around goes around, and since so many generous people helped me on my entrepreneurial journey, it only makes sense that I pass that generosity along. Mentoring and coaching takes time, but the returns you get from coaching others are invaluable. It's one of the single most important aspects of my career today.

#### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The best of the best in any industry are considered thought leaders. Do you know how they get started on that path? By sharing their ideas! Coaching provides the space to mull over ideas, craft them in a way that makes sense to others, and get your message across effectively. (Talk about foundational entrepreneurial skills!)

#### WE'RE ALL A W-I-P

The hardest part of any entrepreneurial journey is how lonely it can feel. Whether an entrepreneur is starting up a venture with a team or all on their own, getting people to see their vision, take a chance on their plan, and support the leap they're making can feel impossible. Every entrepreneur knows the feelings of rejection, isolation, and fear all too well, but they wouldn't be entrepreneurs if they didn't keep going, right?

Those painful life lessons are the raw materials for our future wisdom, but sharing those lessons with younger professionals may help accelerate their wisdom development. When we share the experiences of being an entrepreneur, things feel a lot less lonely and overwhelming for those receiving our message.

No one is perfect; the biggest IPO of the year or the newest product that's taking center stage is never without struggle. If entrepreneurs can get more comfortable with the fact that we're all a work-in-progress (W-I-P)—just like our ventures—we can make the journey a bit more enjoyable.

#### WISDOM AS A MODERN ELDER

If you were to ask me whether I'd have a lot to learn from someone younger than me, my answer would be a resounding "Yes!" I learn things daily from interns, new hires, custodial staff, young managers, and new entrepreneurs. However, I think the real opportunity is that younger entrepreneurs will always be able to learn a lot more from us older entrepreneurs who have been around the block a time or two. I feel it's our duty to help and coach the next generation in order to ensure a robust and thriving entrepreneurial community.

#### FEEL GOOD FOR ALL

At the end of the day, being a coach or a mentor simply feels great! Connecting with people brings a sense of camaraderie, suddenly things feel less lonely for those you coach, you will end up changing lives, and sometimes you even meet people who are going to change your life. Give guidance, share your experiences, do it as a formal coaching engagement or an informal mentoring relationship. However you're approaching helping others, just get into it. When you have your first big win, you'll look back and realize that you are making a difference, and you can feel satisfied, knowing that you had a part in the success of those you coached. ♦

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