



*Our mission is to provide information and strategies to business owners and managers for improvement in the effectiveness of its business management so that key objectives can be realized.*

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## The Business Plan That Always Works

By Michael E. Gerber

Yes, believe it or not, there is such a plan.

A business plan that always works.

And believe it or not, you're going to learn how to create such a plan, your plan, in the next few moments.

Now for those of you who believe deep down in the recesses of your cynically-disposed hearts that there can't possibly be anything that always works—especially a plan—the following is going to be a bit of a stretch for you. But hang in with me here. *The Business Plan That Always Works* is so devilishly simple and straightforward, you'll wonder why you didn't see it before.

You see, that's the beauty of it, this Business Plan That Always Works. It's so very simple. And that's probably the primary reason it always works. The Business Plan That Always Works is so simple that anyone who understands it can do it...which is to say, that if you can't do a plan easily, there's no point in planning. Despite what you've learned over the years, planning is only hard when it's done the wrong way. And to do a plan easily requires that you approach the whole subject of planning in a completely different way than you're accustomed to. But I'm getting ahead of my story.

The Business Plan That Always Works is built upon one Fundamental Principle that all the plans that never work fail to understand.

*(When I say "all the plans that never work," I'm referring to the kind of planning you're accustomed to doing—if you do any planning at all—the kind of planning that doesn't work, has never worked, will never work, the kind of planning every single professional you know who's trying to plan is attempting to do even as we speak despite the little-discussed-and-depressing fact that not one of their best laid plans will ever make one difference in their lives at all other than to unnecessarily frustrate, infuriate and intimidate them, while keeping them busy—uselessly and unproductively—for hours upon end!) You know the kind of plans I'm talking about here. The kind of plans that create gobs of guilt because you don't keep them? The kind of plans that create enormous bouts of self-loathing because you never fulfill them? The kind of plans you make with great effort and tedium, only to find yourself later on doing something completely different than you had planned to do and wondering how you got there from where you began?*

But let's get back to that one Fundamental Principle I'm talking about that differentiates The Business Plan That Always Works from every other plan that doesn't.

I call this Fundamental Principle, the Heart-Centered Principle of Planning.

*(Now, bear with me here. I know this could begin to test your hidebound impatience. You're an entrepreneur after all. World-wise and world-weary. You've seen everything, done everything, been beaten up by everything. You know with every close-to-cynical breath you breathe that language used capriciously can be a dangerous thing. After all, don't you do that for a living: use language to produce results? Well, of course you do. Don't we all? And it can get us all into serious trouble. But despite that, bear with me anyway. This path I'm leading us down is a path no one has ever taken you down before. And it's not capricious. It's deadly earnest. And because of that it can get a little sticky in moments. It can test your patience in moments. It can put me into question in your mind in moments. Despite all that, and despite your natural reservations, let's proceed a few steps further and I believe you'll truly begin to relish this thing we're going to do together, this thing I call The Business Plan That Always Works.)*

The Heart-Centered Plan is so distinctly different from its opposite, The Head-Centered Plan, that it's important to define the distinctions carefully.

## The Business Plan That Always Works (cont.)

There are Seven Essential Rules of Heart-Centered Planning, of creating The Business Plan That Always Works for you.

These seven rules are:

### **RULE ONE**

The first rule says that Heart-Centered Planning begins and ends with a feeling, while Head-Centered Planning begins and ends with a thought. To understand this rule, it is critical that you know the difference between a thought and a feeling. Most people don't. (Don't laugh, they really don't.) Most people often confuse their thoughts with their feelings and their feelings with their thoughts. How do you know the difference between a thought and a feeling? A feeling resides inside your body; a thought resides inside your head. Let me say that again so that it sinks in. A feeling resides inside your body, while a thought resides inside your head. Most of what you're doing right now as you read this article is a thought which is going to turn into a feeling, rather than a feeling which is going to turn into a thought. Heart-Centered Planning starts with a feeling, turns into a thought, and ends with a feeling. Head-Centered Planning begins with a thought, turns into a feeling, and ends with a thought. The rule here is that any plan that ends up in your head is a thought, and, because of that, won't work. The Business Plan That Always Works is dominated by your feelings, not by your thoughts. And because of that, it is propelled forward because you want it to work, as the expression says, with all your heart. The point I'm making here is that despite everything you've been taught to the contrary, cerebral motivation has no momentum of its own. Thoughts die cold and lonely. A plan which describes the future, with no heart, is a plan destined to fail. The Business Plan That Always Works therefore, is a plan which begins and ends in your heart...which means it's a living plan, not a dead one. Which means that it possesses an enormous amount of energy, which people describe as passion. And we all know what passion can do when it's poured into a personal cause. That's what The Business Plan That Always Works is, after all, a personal cause filled with passion.

### **RULE TWO**

Because Heart-Centered Planning begins and ends in your heart, rule number two says that The Business Plan That Always Works must be your plan and no one else's. It must begin with you and end with you. It must be your plan. Any plan created by someone else on your behalf will absolutely never work because it simply isn't your plan. And no matter how hard you try to implement someone else's plan, no matter how hard you work at it, even if you succeed at fulfilling its objectives, you will ultimately feel like you failed. Winning with someone else's plan is always "felt" as losing. In short, The Business Plan That Always Works is always the product of the person who is following the plan, original to him or her, personal to the max, born in the heart, and because of that, very, very private. Rule Number Two says, "Don't go outside of yourself for your plan because you can't find it there."

### **RULE THREE**

The way to know what your heart wants is stop thinking about it. To discover your plan, stop thinking about it. Pursue something else. Spend a day, two days, a week, it doesn't matter how long, only that it accomplishes this objective, that you spend free time doing something you truly love to do, that you don't ordinarily do because you can't afford the time or the money to do it. Skiing. Boating. Fishing. Dreaming. Hiking. Running. It doesn't matter what it is; for every one of us it's different, but it does matter that you know what it is. The truth is we, all of us, spend very little time truly loving what we do or doing what we love. We spend most of our time instead wishing that what we are doing could be more fulfilling. The reason for this is that we are mostly disconnected from our hearts, and spend the preponderance of our time instead actively pursuing thoughts about what we would be doing if we were happy, than experiencing what it means to be joyful in our hearts in the moment. So, to create The Business Plan That Always Works calls for us to experience, as fully as possible, the end product of an exciting plan which is the experience of joy which your plan must create for you in order for it to work for you. And to experience that joy requires that we spend more time before we create our plan, tasting the emotional fruits of it.

### **RULE FOUR**

Most people think of a business plan as a series of benchmarks, or objectives. There is that kind of plan, but that's not what I'm talking about here. A series of benchmarks or objectives delineate actions to be taken in a progressively completed process, but they fail to provide the inner motivation essential for a plan to become a realization. While the steps must be identified before anything can be done purposively, the essence of The Business Plan That Always Works is always able to be summarized in a brief, declarative statement which always begins with "I Want...", and always ends with an experience of having moved forward from where you are...and can be demonstrated by your new ability to do something you love to do more often than you're able to do it now. For example, "I want to be able to spend eight days white water rafting in Montana on the..., etc., etc." Note that the objective here is not something to have, but something to experience. To feel yourself experiencing something you love before you actually experience it is tantamount to experiencing it. Experiencing the experience is core to the successful realization of The Business Plan That Always Works because it distracts you from your head where thoughts reside and puts you squarely in your body where feelings reside. Put another way, the experience at the beginning of the plan, tied to the experience at the end of the plan creates an emotional bridge for you to cross. Without that emotional bridge, most of us find ourselves sweating around among the stones, boulders and mud beneath the bridge, completely oblivious to the fact that the bridge even exists!

## The Business Plan That Always Works (cont.)

### RULE FIVE

Having created an emotionally exciting picture of what you want, it is critical that you create a series of Frames of Reference within which you achieve it over a specific amount of time. A Frame of Reference is like a landing reached on your way up a mountain. It enables you to taste the climb, while resting with a look back and a look forward. Anyone who has ever done this (and we all have to some degree or another) knows the personal inner joy that comes from resting on the way forward, while getting a clear sense of where we've come from and a new picture of where we're going. As a boy, I used to go to Yosemite with my parents, and we would climb for a few hours at a time up the long, sloping trail of one mountain or another, where we would stop from time to time and sit on granite boulders by the side of the trail, look out over the valley, taste the cool fresh air, and listen to the waterfalls off in the distance. There has been very little I've experienced in my life that is permeated by such sweetness as those experiences...those climbs and stops. Those moments of looking back and looking forward. Those sweet, lazy moments in which our plan was in the process of being realized while being realized, all at the very same moment. The Business Plan That Always Works must allow for those precious, sweet moments, those continuous Frames of Reference, because without them there is just the incessant climbing, the reaching for the top, the obsession that comes from an impatient thought, the drive to reach a conclusion. Most plans are like that. They drive us, but they don't renew us. They compel us, but they don't reward us. Such plans may move us forward, but every part of our body ends up resisting the movement even while obeying its dictate. This is the planning of "you should," and "you'd better," rather than the planning which comes from an inner desire, a taste of freedom, a wish for renewal.

### RULE SIX

Rule number six says that the plans we create reflect the life we live rather than the life we want to live. This may seem like the opposite of everything I've been saying up to now, but in fact it is not. The truth is that one cannot plan to be someone one isn't. One cannot create a plan one is unable to implement. One cannot imagine becoming someone one isn't. One cannot love what one cannot experience loving. And so rule number six states that in order to create The Business Plan That Always Works, we must be passionately interested in who we really are and what it is that really moves us. To do this then, we must every day ask ourselves this question, "Who am I?—and then answer it! The fascinating thing about creating The Business Plan That Always Works is that it calls for us to go inside more deeply than outside as we would imagine. This planning has to do more with who we are than who we are going to become. The fact is that anyone who has done this work, that is, pursued their inner reality with a passion, has discovered that in the process of becoming more who we truly are, we discover what we want. And in that discovery, our plan becomes self-evident. "Oh, so that's what I want," this experience says. Or, put another way, "Oh, so that's who I really am." Rule number six says that we must do this thing over and over and over again until it's a permanent fixture in our lives. Only then will the Business Plan That Always Works become self-evident.

### RULE SEVEN

Rule number seven says that until we are able to do rules number one through six with ease, anything we do which closely resembles them is better than anything which doesn't. In short, rule number seven is a mantra which says, "Follow your heart, or your head will destroy you." The most productive business planning is not thinking about ends; it's about experiencing means. It's not about the objective; it's about the process. It's not about getting things; it's about becoming more human. It's not about winning or losing; it's about sitting on the edge of the mountain on the way up, neither going forward nor going backward, to savor the intensely sweet joy of the moment. It's not about pushing yourself, but about experiencing yourself. And, as a business owner, this is as true for your clients as it is for you. Which is to say that if you are unable to understand this truth I'm sharing with you, you will be equally unable to differentiate yourself in the heart of your clients from all those other pushing, striving, dying-to-get-there competitors all around you. And isn't that what The Business Plan That Always Works for an entrepreneur is essentially all about? To put you into a truer, more meaningful relationship with your clients? And to do that, can you see that you must first be in a true relationship with yourself? The Business Plan That Always Works will put you there every single time. Who could ask for anything else?

*Michael Gerber is chairman and founder of E-Myth Worldwide. He reminds you that the opportunity is to go to work ON your life not IN it, and in the process to experience the sweet, radiant, extraordinary joy of the fully-lived moment. His Web site is [www.emyth.com](http://www.emyth.com).*