

# BIG IDEAS...



**FOR SMALL  
BUSINESSES**

**Simple, practical tools and  
tactics to help your small  
business GROW**



**JOHN LAMERTON**

# **BIG IDEAS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES**

SIMPLE, PRACTICAL TOOLS AND TACTICS TO  
HELP YOUR SMALL BUSINESS GROW

JOHN LAMERTON

# COPYRIGHT

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*For Linda. Miss you, Sis.*

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the part of the book that most people skim over, unless you know the author personally, in which case you'll read it line-by-line to see if I've remembered to namecheck you. If I have, you're welcome – and if I haven't, I'm sure it was an honest oversight.

So, a big thank you, thank you, thank you...

To you, dear reader for investing in your education by buying this book. I really hope it makes a difference in your life – if it does, please let me know ([john@bigidea.co.uk](mailto:john@bigidea.co.uk)) as hearing about people making positive changes to their lives makes me feel ten feet tall for the day, as do five-star Amazon reviews, and cake (I can be bribed with either!).

To Sarah, for holding everything together whilst I took time out of our lives to write “this bloody book” as it became known by the end. To Jack and Harry for putting up with me being Grumpy Dad (and getting grumpier the closer I got to deadline...) – I owe you guys, BIG time, and I'm coming back down your end of the see-saw right now.

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To my friends and family. It's been 17 years now, and many of you STILL don't know what I do (don't worry Dad, I haven't included the story about you trying to stick stamps on emails...), but you've kept me grounded, and always supported me, and for that I'll be eternally grateful.

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# INTRODUCTION – TO HELL WITH HUSTLE...

*"I hate being busy. I'm the laziest ambitious person I know."*

*Tim Kreider*

I've been running small businesses since the year 2000 – some successful, some not. But I've learned a shed-load of really useful stuff along the way. And there's some common traits amongst the successful businesses that I've created – traits that just about anyone can put into practice to take their business to the next level (regardless of what level you're currently at)

I've hired staff, fired staff, taken people to court, made a million quid, lost a million quid, sold businesses, bought businesses, laid awake at night worrying about paying the bills, feeling totally overwhelmed. At times I've wanted to jack it all in and get a "real" job, and at other times I've felt on top of the world, like everything I touch turns to gold.

It's a safe bet that if you're struggling with any aspect of your business right now, I've probably lived through that myself at some point over the last two decades.

I'm a former civil servant, who quit the Day Job back in 2001 to chase a dream of becoming an Internet Millionaire. Despite not even owning a computer, let alone having access to the Internet on it, or knowing anything about web design, Internet marketing, or... erm... how to actually run a business.



And yet I DID become an Internet Millionaire. Granted, I didn't manage to KEEP many of those millions, but I DID earn them! Nowadays, I run several companies in the sports betting and property sectors, and mentor ambitious lifestyle business owners. Oh, and I still do some stuff on the Internet. I've stopped chasing the dream of "making millions" now though, and started "living like a millionaire" instead (more on this in the next chapter).

I wrote this book to share some of the simple, practical ways to grow a small business that I've picked up over the last couple of decades. If you're looking for the latest "silver bullet" techniques that involve creating a "funnel" the size of a cross-channel ferry, you're going to be disappointed.

If you want to know how to "blow up" your startup, turn it into a "unicorn", and exit for £50m three years from now, then this book 'ain't gonna be for you. Likewise if you're a big fan of the "grind", or "hustle" as our American cousins like to call it – if working three days straight without sleep, or surviving on a diet of coffee and cigarettes is a badge of honour for you, I'll save you some precious time right now – put this book down and go back to hustling/ grinding/ getting shit done/ JFDI'ing/ some other fancy term for "working really, really hard, for a really, really long time".

Don't get me wrong. I like to "get shit done" as much as the next guy, but I like to get the RIGHT shit done. Not any old shit. Why "hustle" for 100 hours a week doing the wrong stuff, when you could do the things that REALLY move your business forward in 20 to 25 hours a week, and spend the rest of the time with your family, friends, on the golf course, sailing, at the gym, looking at cat videos on the Internet, or whatever else floats your boat?

I mentor ambitious lifestyle business owners, and this book is for them. Don't instantly turn your nose up because I used the term "lifestyle business" – I've never really understood the disregard that so many people have for lifestyle businesses. I'm forever hearing people say things like "oh, they'll only ever be a lifestyle business", or "oh, they're not a real business, they're just a lifestyle business".

I'm not talking about someone who's pursuing a hobby, and dressing it up as a business. I'm talking about owners of small businesses who have ambition, drive, a desire to grow and succeed, but who also want their small business to provide them with a certain lifestyle. And they can DESIGN their business to do exactly that. This is where this book can help. So if you're a small business owner, and your business isn't currently giving you the lifestyle you want, then:

1. That's YOUR fault
2. You CAN change it
3. This book can HELP you do so

## What this book covers

There are five broad topics that we'll cover in this book – I call them my “magic ingredients”, partly because I believe they can make any ambitious lifestyle business successful (but mainly because I can't think of a better name for them!).

I'll introduce you to these “magic ingredients” in chapter three, and all subsequent chapters roughly follow these five themes – but they also serve as standalone lessons on their own merits.

The five magic ingredients are:

1. Goals
2. Desire
3. Knowledge
4. Environment
5. Action

Some of the other “big ideas” you'll learn from reading this book include:

- How almost ANYONE could become a millionaire in their lifetime, given just £200 a month
- Why I blame Richard Branson for my early failures
- How to sell a dozen eggs for over £500
- The ONE THING that truly transformed my business

- How I told fear to f\*\*\* off
- EXACTLY how I made over £100k from ONE marketing campaign
- What the death of my sister taught me about purpose
- How I earn more money working 20 to 25 hours a week than I did working 100+ per week
- How I juggle running an ambitious lifestyle business with raising two young children

## How to use this book

I've deliberately kept things simple in this book – I hate it when some Internet marketing “guru” comes along, and dresses up something that's pretty basic to make it look really complex, just so he looks clever. If you're aspiring to be the next Elon Musk or Richard Branson, then you probably do need to learn some pretty complex stuff, but for the rest of us mere mortals, running a successful, ambitious lifestyle business isn't that hard, and needn't be that complex.

This book is written to be semi-autobiographical, so I've used several stories from the last 17 years of my business career, and a couple from my previous life as a civil servant. They say a wise man learns from his mistakes, whilst a genius learns from someone else's mistakes – well, here's your chance to learn from mine – because believe me, I've made some crackers in my time.

With the benefit of hindsight, I can now see why I failed so spectacularly at times. Hopefully, I'll be able to stop one or two of you from making those same mistakes. Of course, I've also had quite a few successes in that time too, and there are plenty of examples, tools and tactics that you can swipe and deploy in your business.

It's my aim that whatever stage you're at in your small business career, this book will give you at least a handful of big questions to ask yourself about the way you operate and the lifestyle that your business is currently giving you. I hope it'll make you laugh at

times; it may make you cry at others, but more than anything I hope it makes you THINK.

Alongside the narrative, detailing the rollercoaster ride that has been my first two decades as a small business owner, you'll find my "Big Ideas" – these are the key lessons that I would like you to take away from reading this book. Some of them are clichés. Some of them you'll have heard before.

Every single one of them has positively impacted either my business, my life, or both at some point. They're all simple, practical tools and tactics that you can begin to deploy in your business the minute you finish reading this book, and every one of them has the potential to help your business grow.

## Let's go!

There are loads more nuggets than that to be found in the next couple of hundred pages, but I don't want to give you too many spoilers, and ruin your appetite. Are you ready to dive in? Great – so let's look at exactly WHY I'm so passionate about ambitious lifestyle businesses.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

*“When I write, I feel like an armless, legless man with a crayon in his mouth.”*

*Kurt Vonnegut*

John Lamerton is a serial entrepreneur and investor, a former civil servant, who started a dotcom company back in 2000, despite having no skills, knowledge or experience – “but then neither did most of the other dotcom businesses at that time, so I was in good company!”

He’s owned a website that told students where to get free sachets of shampoo, one that told people they’d been caught speeding (when they hadn’t!), and one that told football fans where to get the best pies.

Before he knew it, he was running a dating website, selling office space, working with florists to sell online, and selling package holidays to the Algarve. He’s also owned a bingo website, a finance blog, sold mobile phone insurance, and streamed live sports events.

Trust me, that’s the short version too – John’s owned and operated more than 100 different websites since that first one in 2000. Most have been either sold, or closed down, and he now works primarily in three sectors:

## SPORTS BETTING

John owns a number of online sports betting brands, and specialises in building large, loyal communities of sports betting fans. He’s always looking to add to his portfolio, so if you know of any sports betting communities that are looking for a new home, please get in touch – [john@bigidea.co.uk](mailto:john@bigidea.co.uk)

## MENTORING

John's main passion these days is mentoring ambitious, lifestyle business owners. John runs a paid group mentoring program (the One Percent Club), as well as a FREE Facebook group, which can be found at:

[www.bigidea.co.uk/facebook](http://www.bigidea.co.uk/facebook)

## INVESTING

John invests in UK property, both residential and commercial, as well as providing Angel Investment to some of his mentoring clients. He also buys large, established websites, particularly in the sports betting sector.

He's a perennial optimist, firmly believing that the mighty Plymouth Argyle will one day play in the top tier of English football. So far though, he's witnessed four promotions and five relegations. Still, it only takes a couple of back-to-back promotions... (I told you he was an optimist!) He lives in Plymouth with his wife Sarah, and two children, Jack and Harry.

He's also a bit of a fanboy of Warren Buffett.

And he can always, ALWAYS be bribed with cake.

Mmm, cake...



Photo credit: John Lamerton

## SMALL BUSINESSES CAN THINK BIG... HERE'S HOW:

Former Civil Servant John Lamerton has run more than 60 small businesses since 2000, making millions of pounds, and thousands of mistakes along the way. This book is a collection of the lessons and successes that have led to him coaching and mentoring hundreds of small business owners, teaching them to think bigger, work less, and design their business around the lifestyle they want.

### SOME OF THE “BIG IDEAS” THAT YOU WILL DISCOVER:

- Why the “Dragons” hate lifestyle businesses, and **why you should love them.**
- How almost anyone could become a millionaire in their lifetime, with £200 a month.
- Why John **blames Richard Branson** for his early failures
- How to get **clarity** on your business strategy, and bring that into your daily routine.
- How to sell a dozen eggs for over £500
- **The ONE thing** that truly transformed John's business
- How to find, hire, (and fire!) your first employee.
- Why every Luke **Skywalker needs a Yoda.**
- EXACTLY how he made over £100k from **ONE marketing campaign.**
- The **five magic ingredients** for success in almost any given field.

**JOHN LAMERTON** is a lazy entrepreneur and investor. He balances running an ambitious lifestyle business with raising two young children. A former “hustler”, he now earns more money “working” 20 to 25 hours a week than he used to pulling all nighters and “grinding” for 100+ hours per week. He now mentors fellow ambitious lifestyle business owners, teaching them how to design their business around their lifestyle.



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