

“ . . . then I was a young man a thousand years old, and now  
I am an old man waiting to be born.”

—Charles Bukowski

*Sifting Through the Madness for the  
Word, the Line, the Way*

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## Chapter 1

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# The First Principle

***A Small Business, Built Rightly, Can  
Grow 10,000 Times Its Current Size***

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*The loftier the building, the deeper the foundation must be  
laid.*

—Thomas Kempis



Had each and every one of my previous books begun with this First Principle, we would probably be having a completely different conversation right now. Either more people would have read my books, or fewer would have.

This is because only an infinitesimal number of new business owners start their new business with a notion of size other than the word “small.” And that’s why their businesses never grow beyond their notion.

Most businesses, no matter their age, remain *adamantly* small.

Note that 70 percent of all companies and 100 percent of home businesses are sole proprietorships. One person, or two, and that’s all, operate the business. These businesses are populated by owners working for a living. They are working at a job and nothing more. But of course that’s all they ever wanted to do. All they ever wanted to do was to create a job; to create control over their personal income; to create a place to work, a place to do what they know how to do. Or, if not that, to do something, anything, through which they can turn their labor and ideas into money. In short, they want to be self-employed.

Needless to say, these commercial activities are not businesses at all; not in the context we speak of here. They are gardeners gardening. They are architects bending over their boards. They are therapists tending to their flocks. They are rabbis teaching. They are doers doing what doers do. They are what they are, but nothing more than that. What they do seems to be how they are defined.

In E-Myth terms, they are technicians suffering from entrepreneurial seizures. And lots of attention is spent on them. Time spent teaching them how to organize, to market, to sell, to network, to do their bookkeeping, to get by. They are

told that the idea of going out on their own is to do what they love. And once having done that, everything else will come their way.

Unfortunately, it isn't true, and it never has been. That's why most businesses fail—they aren't businesses at all. And because the people who own them, run them, and depend on them don't really love them for very long, if they ever did.

Because there is nothing to love. Unless work, for the sake of work, is something to love. Unless struggling just to make a living is something to love.

I imagine that you could make a case for it. But, I can't, and I never could. Work for the sake of work is ultimately an exhausting enterprise. All pain, no gain. Always the cart before the horse. Where's the magic, after all?

Not, mind you, that you shouldn't do what you love, if you can. But, you shouldn't attempt to build a business out of it.

More importantly, this book says that instead of doing what you love, you should love what you do. Do it and love it, provided that it makes sense, that is. Provided that there is a magnificent reason for doing it. Provided that it is much bigger than just something you love. Provided that it is something that your customers love, that your employees love, and that the community in which you do business loves. Provided that your business is a lovable, wonderful, loving thing. A remarkable, beautiful, capable, competent . . . oh well, you get my point. Love what you do, and it will love you back. And everything you put into it—your time, your energy, your money, your imagination, your sweat, your purpose, your commitment, your determination—all of that will be called a labor of love.

But, again, for all of that to happen—and it will, as you'll discover in this book—this business of yours has to make sense. And for it to make sense, for it to thrive, for it to become

something much more than a job like it is now, it must possess the unique ability to grow. It must possess the unique ability to grow not just bigger, but to a substantial, unbelievable-to-you-at-this-moment-in-time size.

And that's why "10,000 times" is the First Principle. It will shape every single decision you make from the first moment you decide that a business of your own is something you truly wish to create. Or, even now, even after you've started your own business, even after you've opened the doors, even after you've set out to work like a madman or madwoman, even then, even now, we've got something big to talk about.

## **SOMETHING BIG TO TALK ABOUT**

If it were just about size, of course, this conversation would be unnecessary. Because there's a very big part of you that believes I'm out of my mind.

You're working in your home office. Your kids are running around the house. You've just had breakfast in the kitchen nook, and your wife (or your husband) is telling the kids, "Hush! Daddy's [Mommy's] working!" And the kids react like kids do. They don't listen. Of course not. Would you? Work? What does that mean? It means whatever Mommy and Daddy do when they're not busy with you. Work makes absolutely no sense to kids. Not the kind of work you and your significant other do. If there was a tractor involved, or the horses needed to be fed, or the trees needed to be pruned, or the stone wall needed to be mended, or the car needed to be fixed, yes. Now that's work a kid can understand. It has a direct relationship with living. It's where the food comes from. It has meaning. It's real.

But, not what you do. What you do has no meaning to a kid at all. That's one reason why our kids are so distracted from the ordinary stuff of life. That's why they find so little meaning in what grownups do. And that's why, too, they find so little meaning in what you want them to do.

"To make a living? What's that?"

"Well, silly, that's where the money comes from."

"Oh."

So, the idea is (your kid thinks), that when I grow up like Mommy and Daddy, I too will end up doing things all day that haven't any meaning. So I can make a living. So I can end up old like them.

And so the reasons for this book:

- To talk about the process for creating something that has meaning. A meaning that goes beyond making a living. A meaning that goes beyond getting by. A meaning that goes beyond simply being your own boss. A meaning that goes beyond what your kids see, or what they don't.
- Something bigger. Something grander. Something more potent. Something meaningful has to happen from the very first moment you put your mind to the wheel of your imagination, or your imagination to the wheel of your mind.
- Something you can write home about.

10,000 times! Just think. What would you do if you honestly believed you were going to create 10,000 stores, 10,000 offices, 10,000 shops, or 10,000 orchards. Or 10,000 of whatever it is you have set out to do?

10,000 times! My goodness. Where in the world would you begin? And how? Let's take a look at it.

## THE BEGINNING OF BIG

Everything has a beginning. That's where we are. We are going to invent an enterprise that has the ability to grow 10,000 times. We are going to do that, because if we fail to do that our enterprise won't be an enterprise; it will be incapable of growth. Don't believe me? Look at the business next door.

The business next door is easier to look at than your own. The business next door was started by Joseph, the auto mechanic. Or by Mary, the cook. Or by Frederick, the chiropractor.

But, let's for the moment stick with Joseph.

He comes to work every morning, looking pretty much the same way he looked yesterday morning, and the morning before that.

Joseph is more than likely dressed in his coveralls. They are well-worn coveralls. Probably still have the grease from yesterday's or earlier days' jobs.

On the back of his coveralls it might say something like "Joseph's Auto Repair." What else would it say? Because, of course, that's what Joseph does, and has done for years. Joseph fixes cars. Joseph has always fixed cars, either for someone else or for himself.

Joseph could be, for all you know, a fine mechanic. At least it seems like he could. Of course he may not be, but it's unlikely you'll know. There are lots of cars sitting in the lot waiting for Joseph to fix them. But, it doesn't seem to make much difference to Joseph.

People come and people go, but for all you can tell, Joseph isn't in any hurry, even though his customers seem to be. Even though his customers seem to want their car done, and done now, Joseph isn't in a hurry. But, Joseph has seen just about everything one could see when it comes to fixing cars. Cars break down. Cars get fixed. And the clock goes on, just like before.



Joseph is actually quite lucky. If predictability can be thought of as lucky, that is. Because, no matter what Joseph does or doesn't do, his business seems to continue apace, one car after another, waiting for Joseph to do what Joseph does. . . fix cars.

The clock ticks on and on. And Joseph gets older. If you could span the time, if you could see it from above; if you could watch Joseph from another perspective, see the whole story of Joseph's life, you would know something you don't know now.

Joseph long ago stopped growing. Joseph long ago went to sleep. Joseph is simply going through the motions. Joseph fixes cars. End of Joseph's story.

So, what's missing in this picture? What's missing in the picture of Joseph's Auto Repair? What's missing in the picture of Joseph's Auto Repair is something bigger than Joseph. Something bigger than work. Something bigger than making a living. Something bigger than just a job. Something alive, electric, exciting, challenging. Something that begins in the mind. Something bigger than big.

The idea of 10,000 times.

Which is where you and I are right now. We are in the idea of 10,000 times. With the very first question we are going to ask of our newly emerging company: What do you want to be when you're done? Yes, "What do you want to be when you're done?" is the biggest question we can ask of this new venture as we stand outside the door. As we begin, we see it in our imagination, in all its aspiring glory, as a work of art, a masterpiece, as a glorious system that is so stunningly effective at what it does, that it can aspire to become 10,000 times larger . . . that it can address the substance of scale.

## **SCALE IS THE MULTIPLICATION OF ONE**

Yes, at the outset of your venture the question must be asked: “What must I do so that it can be scaled 10,000 times?”

What must I do so that every action in my company can be perfectly replicated again and again . . . 10,000 times?

What must I do so that every result in my company can be produced by 10,000 others, none of whom possesses my experience, my dedication, my skill?

Do you see the significance of these questions, my friend?

By asking these questions, you have gone beyond the province of the doer. By asking them you have entered the province of the inventor.

By pursuing them, you have awakened the true entrepreneur within.

You are now Henry Ford. Or Sam Walton. Or Michael Dell. Or Ray Kroc. Or Mary Kay. Or Anita Roddick.

This is then our conversation.

Let’s look at it from the standpoint of work.

## **YOU ARE JOSEPH NEXT DOOR**

Joseph saw 10,000 auto repair shops in his future. He thought to himself, “Why can’t I do that? What is preventing me from creating a stunning enterprise of 10,000 repair shops called Joseph’s? Just like Henry Ford did?”

He began, as we discussed earlier, at the beginning. To achieve that result, he will have to design a method of auto repair that is uniquely his own. Rather than simply fixing all cars, he will have to select exactly the cars that he wishes to repair. In

that way, he will limit the number of options available. And by limiting the number of options available, he can direct his attention with focus. So, Joseph asked himself, “What exactly will the auto repair I do be? What is the most significant opportunity in auto repair? What do I know about the business of auto repair, its trends, where people are having the most problems, what does the research say about the most significant opportunities in auto repair?” On a hunch, Joseph asked himself, “How about green auto repair? What would green auto repair look like? What would distinguish Joseph’s Green Auto from everyone else?”

And then, based only on that hunch, Joseph began to research the word “green.” The ecology of automobiles. The ecology of green services. The words people were using. The frustrations people were having. The processes that could be thought of as green, as ecologically friendly, as anything and everything other than simply the words “auto repair.” In short, Joseph began to think like an entrepreneur, who had size in mind, a grand result in mind, a great leap into the future in mind. He began to think of anything and everything other than simply fixing cars. He was no longer a mechanic. He was an entrepreneur.

And then the entrepreneur named Joseph thought about General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler, all of whom were closing down their dealerships and closing down their service centers. There must be an opportunity there, thought Joseph the New Entrepreneur. “And what about all the other automobile companies?” Joseph thought. “There must be something going on there that has to be interesting. And what about all the people who are losing their jobs? And what about the cost of auto repair?” As Joseph pondered these questions, he was more excited than he’d been in a long, long time. There has to be something in

that muddle, Joseph thought, something waiting for me to see. 10,000 times, Joseph thought. 10,000 times an opportunity to see.

Can you feel the difference it makes thinking like new Joseph rather than like old Joseph?

Can you begin to feel what a huge difference it makes when you think 10,000 times?

Can you see that the questions you begin to ask are more provocative, less ordinary?

Can you see that these questions draw you out of your ordinary mind, and take you into places you have never gone before?

Do you see that old Joseph simply went to work?

And that going to work is exactly the opposite of what you need to do?

Do you see that going to work, as countless millions of new small business owners do, and have done for generations of start-ups, is exactly why most small businesses are doomed to not only stay small but to die small?

And there has always been another option. It's that option we are addressing here. Think 10,000 times. Think it again. Never let it leave your mind. Because in the magic of 10,000 times lies the secret of growth. And the secret of growth is your key.

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Remember: If you care to, you will dare to. And nothing else will be required of you other than the will.

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