

# DO BUSINESS BETTER

Traits, Habits, and Actions  
to Help You Succeed

**DAMIAN MASON**

Foreword by *New York Times*  
Best Selling Author Larry Winget

WILEY



**DO  
BUSINESS  
BETTER**

“As a small business owner, I find myself sifting through business books seeking information that is realistic and relevant. While reading this book, I was able to take suggestions and apply them immediately. *Do Business Better* is helping my business successfully roll into our second decade.”

—Angie Carel,  
Owner of IBA Design

“Better always beats best, and this book will show you how you can get that competitive advantage. In this book, Damian Mason provides practical, actionable ideas you can use to better your best. I recommend it.”

—Mark Sanborn, author,  
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—Jamie Shinabarger,  
President/CEO Springs Valley Bank & Trust

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# Foreword

It is my firm belief that people want both life and business to be hard so they will have an excuse for not doing well. After all, who wants to admit failure at something that is really pretty simple, right? But the reality is that life just isn't all that hard. Neither is business. Sure, it can be difficult from time to time, and disasters may happen along the way. But for the most part, when you boil it all down, success in both life and business is really based on some pretty simple, basic stuff. "It" isn't hard, but we sure seem to enjoy making it hard and believing it's hard.

It has been my experience that the reason most people aren't as successful as they want to be is that they never learn or they too quickly forget the simple, basic principles it takes to do well. Then when they struggle in either their life or their business, they go searching for answers and will invariably gravitate toward intricate, complicated solutions. Interesting approach, since what got them into trouble in the first place wasn't intricate or complicated at all; it was the lack of application of simple, basic principles. Want to lose weight? Eat less, exercise more. That is a simple solution that works 99% of the time. But people don't want that solution; they would rather spend money on silly ideas like an Ab Cruncher or a pill promoted by a celebrity. That's why the weight loss industry is a \$66 billion industry. Eating less and exercising more won't cost you a dime, but the solution just seems too simple and basic for people to accept.

Even when people are doing well but want to do better, they skip the simple, basic stuff that would help them do better and go for the complicated, sexier stuff that seems to be all the rage. Business books have become more and more about offering complex solutions to simple problems. Authors know that few people really want to be reminded about getting back to basics. People believe they are already doing the basics well enough and want what's hot and is the flavor of the day. Well, what's hot is rarely the solution to the problem. The problem, 9 times out of 10, was caused because the basics were ignored.

That's what I enjoy most about *Do Business Better*; it's about the basics. That's even what I like best about the title. The title doesn't promise you anything grandiose like how you will become the biggest, the best, or the richest. And it isn't one of those silly titles we see way too often that is hard to understand, with ideas inside that are even harder to implement. The title of this little book is basic and reminds us of what we all ultimately want: the ability to do business better. The content inside is the same way. This book gives you solid, basic ideas that will show you how to do business better. And if you are honest with yourself, that is what you are really looking for. You aren't looking to totally overhaul what got you where you are. That's too big of a task, and you aren't going to do it anyway. What you really want is a handful of ideas, strategies and tactics that will help you tweak what you are doing today so you can do business better tomorrow. And the simpler to implement, and the fewer of them there are, the better.

And that's exactly what Damian delivers. He gives you solid, tactical, simple, easy-to-implement ideas that will help you do business better so you can enjoy your life with fewer headaches, less frustration, and end up with more money in the piggy bank. What more could you ask for?

I've known Damian for many years. We have sat on each other's patio and talked about every topic under the sun. We have probably shared a thousand cigars and more than a few drinks kicking around ideas on business, life, money, aging, relationships, politics, dogs, and other things I am unwilling to mention here. Damian is a successful speaker, farmer, and businessman. In all of our many hours of conversation, we have laughed about how difficult people make things, when it simply isn't necessary. Damian, like me, can attribute all of his success to excelling at the simple, basic stuff. Nothing fancy and nothing that anyone else couldn't do if they would just get out of their own way and do the work. That's why we get along so well. We agree that success is attainable for all willing to get back to basics and do the work.

Damian has a sharp mind and a sharper tongue. He is fun to talk to, and I get a kick out of how his mind works. His stuff is also fun to read and you will enjoy his writing, his humor, and the great ideas that will help you do business better.

Larry Winget



# Introduction

## I Get You

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I wrote this book for you. You, the aspiring entrepreneur, budding businessperson, or established business owner pursuing growth.

I understand you because I am you. When I resigned from corporate America to command my own ship, I needed this book. Just like you do.

You've read business books. You've seen the flowery fluff. You've studied (or tried to) the books of platitudes telling you to keep a positive mental attitude.

Now it's time for you to put some meat in your diet of entrepreneurial learning. This book is your reality burger.

## Let's Talk About You

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You're overwhelmed. Your suppliers frustrate you. So do your employees. Sometimes your customers do, too.

Or maybe you're still working a normal job and your co-workers frustrate you. Because you're not like them. You don't want to die in a job you hate.

You think about money. Even when times are good. Because you've endured several months when finances were a struggle. You're willing to make financial sacrifices now for a greater financial reward in the future.

Your creativity isn't stoked in your current capacity. Or maybe you run your own business and you struggle to find time for creative indulgence.

You are your company's best salesperson. It'd be fantastic if sales doubled and you could raise your prices. Your less inventive competitors cheapen the market.

Sometimes you're tempted to throw in the towel and give up on being your own boss. But your independent side won't let you. You have goals. Frankly, you've already achieved more than most people thought you would when you announced your intentions years ago.

Maybe you're on the cusp of launching your endeavor. You don't tell your peers of your intention. You don't want to hear them doubt you and your abilities.

You know success is attainable. Naysayers annoy you. You want more for yourself than others want for themselves. This doesn't make you greedy; it makes you a minority. Because you're actually willing to work for it.

You've failed before. Probably a few times. But you learned from failure. You learn best from the lessons you pay for and you view your failures as the price of tuition. Your stumbles taught you that strivers are judged by those who've never even made an attempt.

You think about work and business a lot. You like how you feel when you've been productive. You relish the sense and feel of accomplishment.

I'm guessing multiple statements in the above paragraphs accurately describe you.

While others may not understand you or your ambition, I get you. I want you to prosper by doing business better.

## Trying versus Doing

---

If you believe it is possible to create the life and business of one's choosing, you're in the right place. To accomplish this, you must *do*, not *try*.

Everyone's "trying" to do something, aren't they? Broke people are "trying" to save money. Bad parents are "trying" to spend more time with their kids. Dissatisfied employees are "trying" to find a fulfilling job. Some of those dissatisfied employees are "trying" to start their own business.

Understand this: "Try" is bullshit.

"Try" is what weak people say when they mean "no."

"Try" is what underachievers say when they seek credit for doing something they didn't do.

"I'll try to make it" means "I'm not coming but instead of saying 'no' I'll say 'try' to avoid hurting your feelings."

"I'll try to get your project done" means "I am lazy and won't work on any of this but I fear you'll yell at me so I'm lying instead."

This book isn't titled "TRY to Do Business Better." It's titled "DO Business Better."

That's intentional.

## **Invest a Couple Hours, Then *Do It!***

I know your time is valuable. You're working a job and contemplating a jump off the high dive. Maybe you're already swimming in the deep end known as business ownership. Either way, you have plenty of demands on your schedule.

This book will take you no more than a few hours to complete. The applicable takeaways will save you months of frustration. Maybe even years. From a time investment standpoint, that's one helluva ROI!

There are short, simple exercises within many of the chapters. Do them. It'll make you stronger.

The goal: to accentuate your traits, implement habits, and take actions that allow you to prosper.

## **xiv Introduction**

When you're finished with this book, you'll know:

- The traits of entrepreneurial success and how to tap into yours.
- Success habits to intentionally develop.
- Actions that lead to prosperity.
- How to exploit and expand upon your strengths.
- How to create a life and business by choice!

Are you ready to Do Business Better?



# 1

## Success Defined. By You.

### Success Is Different for Everyone —

In the pages that follow you're going to see a lot of references to success. As you would in any business or self-help book. Remember, there's big money to be made in telling people they can be successful. Particularly if you tell people no effort is required, other than buying what the success peddler is selling, of course!

I won't tell you success is easy. I won't tell you it requires no effort. Success requires effort. Success also requires changing what you're currently doing or how you're doing it.

Before we roll into how you can succeed, let's first define success.

Hint: Yours is the only definition that matters.

Ask 100 people what success means to them and you'll get 100 different responses. There's the superficial—a Lamborghini in the driveway or a mansion with boats and jewelry. Then there's the more spiritual concept of contented peacefulness. Maybe for the family-oriented sort, success is all about time with loved ones.

## 2 Success Defined. By You.

You're entitled to whatever mental picture of success you want. What matters is that you possess a mental picture of success. Also, it's okay if that picture of success changes over time. That's called growth. It's good to let your vision of success evolve. It's bad when your picture of success changes because you simply gave up.

### Your Evolving View of Success ---

As a 20-year-old, I thought success was a Mustang 5.0 convertible with a "DAMIAN" vanity plate. I toiled as a factory worker and laborer with that view of me someday hitting the zenith of accomplishment.

Then I grew up and it dawned on me: I'm not in a 1980s rock-and-roll video. I don't comfortably fit in that era of Mustang. And I don't need a vanity plate to make me any more identifiable.

The point: As you mature, your picture of success will be slightly different from what it was at age 20. Today I could have a garage full of 1988 Mustangs. All with personalized license plates. But I no longer deem that the picture of success.

Things change. Life events cause change. Hopefully, you as a person are changing (for the better!). The crucial element to success isn't that the picture stays the same. What's crucial is that you don't throw in the towel and just accept mediocrity.

You know people like that and so do I. It's pathetic. You watch them underachieving, making no effort. All the while they're lying to themselves, pretending it's what they've always wanted.

It's acceptable for your definition of success to evolve. Unless evolution means giving up.

## **"I Just Want to Be Happy!"**

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Several of those 100 respondents we hypothetically asked, "What does success look like to you?" will answer: "I just want to be happy."

When I hear people say this, I honestly think about hitting them with an axe handle. My dog "just wants to be happy," too. You're a grown-up and a human. You are in charge of your life, much as many people pretend otherwise, thereby avoiding responsibility for the outcome. Saying "I just want to be happy" won't make you happy. Happiness is an active choice and generally requires doing something with purpose.

So it goes with success. How you define it is up to you. The important step is that you *do* define it. Then burn a picture in your brain of what it looks like. That picture of success in your head is where you're going. Success, as defined by you, is your journey and your destination. Do you see it?

## **To Help You Out, Here's My Definition of Success**

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Each day, doing more of my choosing, and less that is imposed upon me. With financial resources to do so. Actively, enjoyably, and flavorfully.

My version of success involves working. I enjoy productivity. But increasingly, I want it to be on my conditions. That's where the money comes in. Not for vanity license plates, but for the choice it affords me. Lastly, success to me is being physically active until death, with my wife and dog, then enjoying tasty food, beer, and cigars at the end of the day.

## **4 Success Defined. By You.**

To me, working and living on one's own terms, is success. Is there more? What does your mental picture of success look like?

What's your definition of success?

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# 2

## Get Better

I had a role years ago in a fairly forgettable movie titled *2001: A Space Travesty*. If you're really bored some day, order it up and watch it. Don't do it for my benefit, though—I don't get residual payments!

The film starred Leslie Nielsen. I have 40 minutes of screen time, which puts me loosely in a supporting actor role. While filming a scene, Mr. Nielsen gave me some input.

"Damian, do you want to be a successful actor?"

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Then I've got two words of advice for you: Get better."

The cast and crew got a good laugh at the famous actor's wise-crack. But Mr. Nielsen's point is valid, comedy aside. If you want to be successful at acting—or anything—get better.

I'm really not an actor. Yes, I have Screen Actors Guild membership and yes, I've been paid to act in several productions. But there's slim chance you'll ever see a Damian Mason star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. That's fine with me.

I did take Leslie Nielsen's advice. At that point in my life and career, I was being paid to act. Being paid to do something makes you a professional. Therefore, my business was acting. So, I made it my business to get better at my business.

I studied the methods and habits of seasoned actors who were on set with me. During slow spells between filming, I sought training from my more experienced co-stars. By the way, if you've never been involved in movie production, it's almost entirely slow time between filming! I utilized that slow time to do business better.

This book is all about doing business better. For that to happen, *you* must get better. Maybe you've been in business a long time. Or maybe you're still an employee plotting your entrepreneurial venture. Either way, you can always improve.

It's been 20 years since I was in front of the camera with Leslie Nielsen. At least once a week I recall those words. I apply the simple advice to everything I do. Want to be successful? *Get better!*

## I Didn't Say Get Perfect

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Notice I did not say, "Get perfect"? I said, get better.

Perfect means without flaws, defects, or shortcomings. Sound like anyone you know? Businesses are owned and staffed with humans. Businesses profit by serving humans. There is no such thing as a human without flaws, defects, or shortcomings. That's why better is a more practical objective than perfect.

### Perfect Isn't Profitable

If you wait until your product is perfect, you'll never sell any product. That's why you receive recall notices on cars you own. They sell them before they're perfect.

Lexus once had an advertising slogan touting "the relentless pursuit of perfection." But they never claimed their cars *were* perfect. They just claimed they were "pursuing" perfect. Certainly, Lexus makes a nice automobile. But management

doesn't hold cars in the factory until they're perfect or they'd be bankrupt. The same goes for your company.

## **Perfection Is Unattainable**

Perfect is unattainable. You might argue by telling me your daughter received a perfect test score. Okay. Yes, perfect scores are attainable. In scholastics! Now convert her test score into a business. There are vast differences between business and academia. (Please don't get me started here!). Businesses have to make money selling products and services. Perfect products and services don't exist.

## **Lack of Perfection Doesn't Mean Lack of Performance**

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My Nissan Maxima isn't perfect. Heck, Nissan doesn't even pursue perfection! Their advertising touts "innovation that excites." Yet, my Nissan performs remarkably well, despite its imperfections. Incidentally, it's not that exciting either, contrary to its marketing.

You can be amazingly successful selling good, but not perfect, products that perform. Truth is, the marketplace doesn't even expect perfect. Because almost nothing is!

Look at swimmer Michael Phelps, the most decorated athlete in Olympic history. Winner of 28 medals, 23 of which are gold. I'm willing to bet Michael Phelps would analyze his gold medal performances and point out flaws. Maybe his turns were less fluid than ideal or his dive entry was off a smidge.

That's right, the best swimmer in the history of sport would likely tell you his competitive swims were slightly imperfect.

You can always find a defect or a shortcoming. By all means, work to correct your flaws. That's what getting better is all

## 8 Get Better

about. But if you wait until you, your product, and your business are perfect, you'll die before you ever turn a nickel.

"Better" is attainable. "Better" is profitable. "Perfect" isn't necessary.



# 1

## Traits

Chapter 3—Four Unwavering Traits of  
Entrepreneurial Success

Chapter 4—Risk Tolerance

Chapter 5—Drive

Chapter 6—Resilience

Chapter 7—Vision

