


WHAT
YOU
TO
KNOW
ABOUT

NEED

**STARTING
A
BUSINESS**

**KEVIN
DUNCAN**



This is the stuff you've always been embarrassed to ask about the world of modern business.

The *What You Need to Know . . .* books can get you up to speed on a core business subject fast. Whether it's for a new job, a new responsibility, or a meeting with someone you need to impress, these books will give you what you need to get by as someone who knows what they're talking about.

Each book contains:

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- ▶ **Who You Need to Know** – the basics about the key players
- ▶ **Who Said It** – quotes from key figures
- ▶ **How You Need to Do It** – key steps to put your new-found knowledge into practice
- ▶ **What You Need to Read** – books and online resources for if you want to deepen your knowledge
- ▶ **If You Only Remember One Thing** – a one-liner of the most important information

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- ▶ *What You Need to Know about Economics*
- ▶ *What You Need to Know about Project Management*
- ▶ *What You Need to Know about Leadership*
- ▶ *What You Need to Know about Strategy*
- ▶ *What You Need to Know about Marketing*

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For Sarah, Rosanna and Shaunagh.



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INTRODUCTION

Starting a business can be a daunting prospect, but it doesn't have to be as bad as some people make out. In fact, it's a hugely exciting time. Big plans can be inspiring, but doing the simple stuff well makes a huge difference. Some people try to overcomplicate matters, and this often leads to unnecessary delay, and can reduce confidence in the early days. This book takes a positive approach. Practical matters are kept straightforward, and there is plenty of advice on keeping in the right frame of mind. There is inspiration from people who have been there before, and plenty of back-up ideas for when things don't go quite as planned.

Millions of small businesses launch every year so you are not alone when it comes to thinking of starting one. Picking up this book is the first step on an adventurous and challenging road. From the beginning, the knack is to investigate the possible approaches for your business calmly and simply. Too many people flap around with hundreds of spreadsheets and lose their bearings in the process. So we'll take it gently so as to keep you saner in the crucial start-up phase.

In the early days, it is crucial to scrutinize the original idea very carefully. Of course, some are dead on arrival, and others need crafting before they make sense and can prove their value. Few are brilliant immediately, so you need patience and an open mind. Ideas are nothing if they cannot be enacted effectively, so we will be as clear as possible about this from the very beginning.

We will of course be examining the dreaded business plan. There is a skill to good business planning and anyone can learn it. Doing something is the first step. Too many businesses fail to get under way because they are still in the planning phase and never come out of it. It's a great feeling to discover that in fact you may be able to complete this in a matter of days.

Not surprisingly, there is always some boring stuff to cover, but when it's your own business somehow the motivation is that bit easier because you are the one to benefit. Knowing what you need to run an effective business is vital, and that means having a good working knowledge of the law, and appropriate systems to enable you to report business performance accurately.

The money bit may sound nasty but you can't run a business without it – it's actually what business is all about. So good budding entrepreneurs need to learn how to confront pricing, cash flow, supplier payment, and many other financial matters in a cheerful and pragmatic manner.

Nor can you run a business without some form of sales and marketing, so you need to let people know who you are, where you are, and what you do. You need to know where to find your customers, and how to communicate with them in a charming and positive way. People who start businesses often have a gift for this, but if it doesn't come naturally, don't worry, because there are simple things that anyone can do to promote their business.

You will soon discover that starting a business is a highly personal matter, and as such it is quite hard to take the emotion out of it. So in fact a lot of what at first appears to be factual ends up being emotional. The main reasons for this are that the original idea will be yours, pretty much all the decisions are yours, and the success of the venture is yours. So it is almost impossible to divorce the fortunes of the business from those of the owner, and that's you.

So it's all about you, which may seem rather scary at this stage, but in fact it turns out to be brilliant, because the rewards are all yours, and it's great to see a direct link between the effort you put in and the satisfaction you get back.

Each chapter has a number of common elements:

What It's All About – A quick summary at the start listing the important points that will be covered.

Who You Need to Know – Influential figures you need to know about.

Who Said It – Quotes from famous figures to remind, inspire and amuse you.

What You Need to Read – Suggestions of good sources for further reading at the end of each chapter.

If You Only Remember One Thing – A short line or two summing up the contents of each chapter.

Starting a business is all about taking action. Careful thought and planning is vital of course, but there's no substitute for getting on and doing something. That is very much a theme of the book, and it is intentionally organized in such a way as to encourage you to get out there and do it.