



Whether people work in an office, a school or a hospital, a tennis club or a scuba-diving shop, they always find ways of working, individually and together, to get the job done.

Most people end up working very hard, and long hours. They think these are good signs. If they are working hard and round the clock it must mean they are doing a good job.

Not necessarily.

Busy is not the same as effective. Lots of people are busy, but very busy people don't always achieve lots. People at work often run a marathon to move their organization forward by a step.

There are many reasons why this might happen. It's not usually because they are stupid, wilful or lazy.

It can be because their roles are confused or the priorities aren't clear. It can be because they believe they have to do things a certain way and it can never change. It can be because no one can make a decision.

Or because everyone is so busy doing urgent things they never get round to what's important.

Wine Bar Theory is the antidote to all that.

Following the 28 Wine Bar Theory rules will help you do an excellent job, without stress and without needing huge amounts of time.

The rules will apply to the organization you already work in or a new one you want to start.

They will help you succeed personally, whether you are the boss or the doorman.

They will give you the licence to challenge and change things that take hours to complete but don't really take your business forward much at all. You could be using that time so much better!

Wine Bar Theory wins you time.

It helps you see things you can do more easily and things you don't need to do at all. The time and energy you save you can use to do something else instead.

You might spend it at work learning new stuff, or taking time out to think and to imagine. Or outside it, recharging your batteries, or just having fun.

Maybe you could play ball, knit a sweater, go fish.

Or if you're like me, go to a wine bar and relax with friends!

Of course, if you work somewhere where people don't make any difference to what goes on and marvellous things just jump out of a box by magic then this is not a book for you.

Put it down now and go find yourself another book!

Sorry, wait a moment.

If you work somewhere where things jump out of a box by magic, you will need something to do while you are guarding the box. So read this book anyway. It will tell you what the rest of us are doing while you are sitting there.

OK. Let's go. Here are the Rules.

The Rules

- 1 Make your business sustainable
- 2 Keep it simple
- 3 Keep asking
- 4 Reason to believe
- 5 Get a distinction
- 6 Know where you are going
- 7 Aim to do more, not the same
- 8 Don't increase profit at the expense of growth
- 9 Enrich your customer
- 10 Cut smart
- 11 Invest in winning marketing
- 12 Don't guess ...
- 13 ... and don't invite guesses
- 14 Be more responsible: give away responsibility
- 15 Be brave, not reckless
- 16 Be better at standing things up
- 17 Insist on the best
- 18 Surround yourself with specialist excellence
- 19 If talent exists, promote it
- 20 Beware the Plausible Idiot
- 21 Do the job with the right resources, quickly
- 22 Buyer beware
- 23 Think big, keep nimble
- 24 Lead more, manage less
- 25 Recognize real success
- 26 Say sorry
- 27 Stand in the other person's shoes
- 28 Enjoy!

1

Make your business sustainable

Now, before you start thinking about wind farms, climate change and the future of the planet, I don't mean that. That's a recent kidnapping of the word 'sustainable', which was around doing a perfectly good job for years before anyone thought of installing a solar panel or growing themselves a turf roof.

Let's set 'sustainable' free again. It simply means 'can keep going'.

People who run businesses are often encouraged by people who don't (usually called advisers) to write lots of documents and presentations about the strategic vision and mission of their business.

This is great for the advisers because it gives them something to talk about, for months, sometimes years. Because advisers want to be sustainable too they tend to prolong this as long as they can, and create wealth for themselves while they do.



“Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement and success have no meaning.”

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706–90)
PHILOSOPHER, INVENTOR,
WRITER AND DIPLOMAT**

Trouble is, it’s usually a waste of time for the business they are advising.

Every business can come up with its mission in one minute, and write it on a piece of paper you could stick on a fridge.

Here, for example, is a mission statement for a business that makes cakes:

‘We make cakes. We want to keep going.’

OK, just to be clear, that only works as a mission statement if you are a cake business. Using those exact words would worry people if you were a mountain guide business.

To write the mission statement for the business you work in, tune the first sentence a bit to make it say what you do. The second sentence should work just fine, whatever business you are. Leave it be. ‘We want to keep going.’

Then tell the advisers they can go and keep going, too.

Hooray! You’ve already saved some time and money.

Now you’re in business. Simple.

2

Keep it simple

The world is full of over-educated nitwits, who devote their lives to making things complicated.

Here's why complicated is not good.

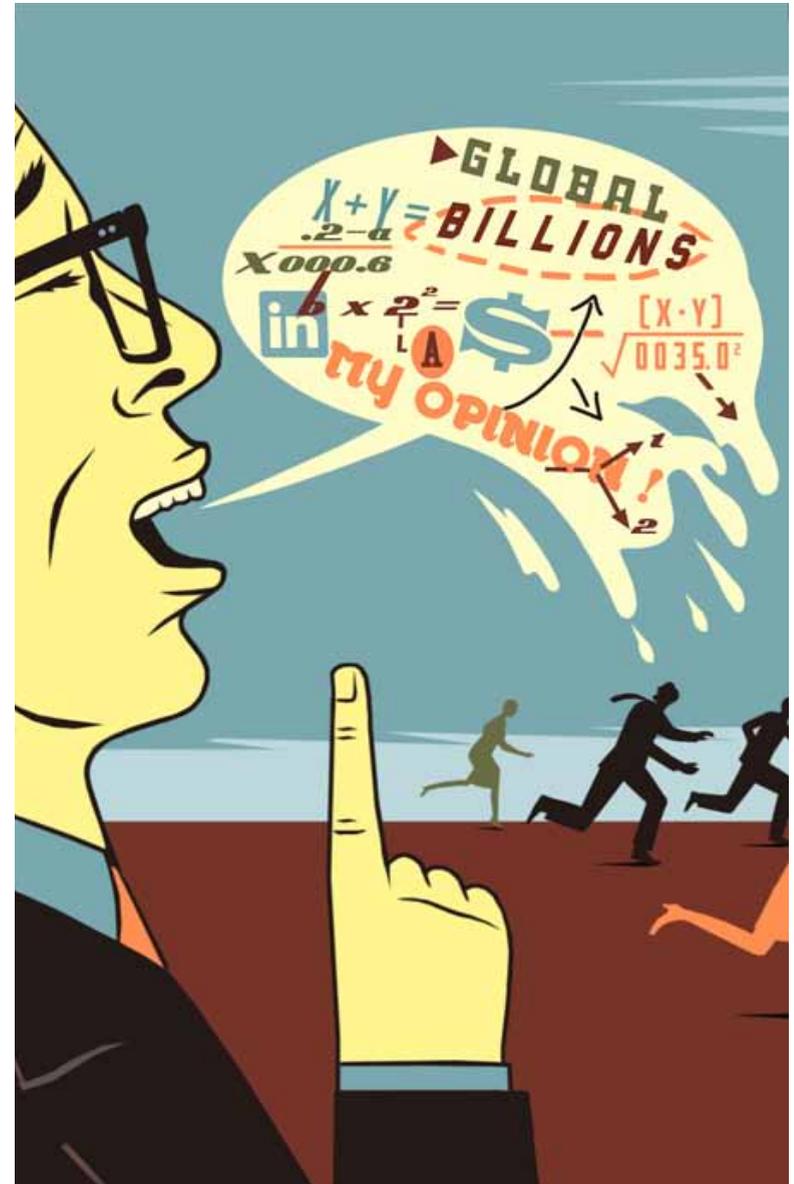
Complicated is hard to understand. If a business is complicated, most people don't get what it does so they find it hard to join in or help.

They also run away because it makes them feel stupid.

If you think something is complicated it's because you haven't finished thinking about it. If you haven't finished thinking about it that means you don't quite get it. If you don't understand something properly, you will find it impossible to explain it to anyone else.

Don't assume people understand complicated things. They don't. Work it through. Don't pass on complex messages. Distil the significant.

Smart people make the complicated simple.



Make sure you can describe your business simply. Then you can explain it to someone attractive you just met and are sitting next to at a dinner party, or on a park bench.

By the time you finish telling them what you do they need to be looking deeply into your eyes. Not lying face down in their soup. Or wandering off to find another bench.

Go on then!

You have thirty seconds. Captivate them!

Once you can tell another person what your business is and why it's special, without their eyes glazing over, you are on the road to success.

You will be able to ask them to come help you do it or to buy some of what it is you are already fetching or making.

So how do you keep it simple?

By asking simple questions.

That's the third rule of Wine Bar Theory.

