

SECOND EDITION

CONQUER



The **Six Keys** to
Success for Entrepreneurs

CLATE MASK

WILEY

Mike Callahan is a great entrepreneur. Right out of high school, he started a landscaping business and poured his heart and soul into it. After the normal struggles in the early stages of any business, he began to produce income at levels his friends and family envied. His business was succeeding by all accounts. Soon he married his girlfriend and life was going great.

As the business grew, it demanded more and more of Mike. Not just his time—it demanded his energy, creativity, and passion. He was happily growing the business, feeling a rush of excitement that’s hard to describe if you haven’t started a business that’s succeeding. Most people have no idea what it’s like to pour their energy, their finances, and their very identity into a business that struggles early on, starts to show promise, and then produces the cash and satisfaction the entrepreneur always hoped for. It is thrilling!

Mike was living the entrepreneur’s dream. But things were out of balance at home. His wife was feeling neglected. So Mike did what most entrepreneurs do when wearing many hats in the business and running a juggling act in their personal lives. Mike did his best to be there for his wife as the business continued to grow. And yet important events were slipping. Little moments and opportunities were lost. Life was all about the business. Hobbies, friends, and personal interests had faded to the background. And Mike’s marriage was going downhill.

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On Valentine's Day, Mike got the devastating news. His wife was done. She was leaving him, feeling betrayed by Mike and the business he loved. No amount of apology would change her mind. They got divorced, both of their hearts crushed by the growing and successful business that was taking more of Mike's time and energy than he ever anticipated.

Unfortunately, Mike's story is not unique. More and more people are drawn to entrepreneurship, as we will discuss in this chapter. They pour their blood, sweat, and tears into creating a successful business. Meanwhile, they are juggling all the responsibilities in their personal lives, trying their best to make it all work.

For some, their *struggling* business is overwhelming them, causing them to feel trapped and controlled by the business. For others, their *successful* business is almost an addiction, seducing them to spend every possible moment on the business. Most entrepreneurs are somewhere in between the struggling and successful ends of the spectrum. Nearly all feel like there aren't enough hours in the day. And so they make trade-offs and sacrifices that flirt dangerously with their health, relationships, and other personal priorities.

There is a better way. This book is about building a great business and a great life, in a balanced way. Too many of us entrepreneurs get caught up in the pursuit of success. And let's be clear: the success is so fun and exciting! And the struggles are demanding and unavoidable. Which is why we entrepreneurs need a guidebook to navigate the Quest for Success.

After 20 years of living it, observing it, and coaching it, this is my heartfelt attempt to guide entrepreneurs through it. If one entrepreneur reads this book and is helped by it, this book will be worth it. My hope is that many will be helped by it, achieving their business dreams in a way that serves and supports their personal lives.

Mike's story has a happy ending. In his sadness and resolve to find a better way to run his lawncare business, he found the Keys to Success. Sometimes he found a key by providence,

sometimes by perseverance. It took time, but he found them. And the Six Keys allowed him to become an absentee seven-figure lawncare business owner and eventually sell the business as a turnkey operation that didn't revolve around him.

Today Mike is killing it in business and his personal life. His new business is coaching landscapers to run a successful business of their own, teaching them these very Keys to Success that he discovered on his journey. He's happily remarried, with the money, time, control, and impact—the true freedom—that entrepreneurs dream of.

Good for Mike! Let's spread that goodness to you and other entrepreneurs as we conquer the chaos using the Six Keys to Business and Personal Success.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

This book is for the entrepreneur who went into business looking for freedom and instead found chaos. This book is for entrepreneurs who feel great tension between their business and their personal life. It's for entrepreneurs who feel trapped, controlled, and consumed by their business, not achieving the success they dreamed of. This book is also for entrepreneurs who are running a successful business but whose personal lives are out of balance. The purpose of this book is to help entrepreneurs build a great business. . . *and* a great life.

If you see yourself in this picture, know this: you're in good company. The vast majority of small business owners are either struggling in their business or they're struggling in their personal lives as they pour their energy into a successful business. All the while, entrepreneurs put on a happy face, finding satisfaction in the many wonderful aspects of business ownership. But too often they are sacrificing what matters most—health, relationships, values, and other important life interests.

Over the past two decades, I have become well acquainted with the success and struggle of entrepreneurship. I have

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personally battled through the trials and celebrated the triumphs. More importantly, I've been fortunate to see up close and personal the stories of hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurs—customers, partners, and small business owners around the globe winning in business and life. This is not easy stuff, but it's worth it, *if*—and that's a big if—the entrepreneur pursues success with a balanced approach.

As the CEO of Keap, I love entrepreneurs, and so do our employees. We love your tenacity, ambition, work ethic, innovation, and creativity. We love your grit and guts to cast aside fear and criticism in order to go out and do something bold and daring that will create a ton of value, bring satisfaction to your souls, and produce opportunity for yourselves and all those you employ. At Keap, our purpose is to “liberate and empower entrepreneurs” so they can strengthen families, communities, and economies.

We love helping entrepreneurs succeed! And we *hate* seeing entrepreneurs fail. We hate seeing entrepreneurs close their doors. We hate seeing them lose hope. We hate seeing their confidence squashed, financial lives ruined, and relationships shattered. We hate seeing entrepreneurs' creative fire doused when their business or personal life falls apart.

We hate it because we have been there ourselves. And we have shared in the tragedies of far too many entrepreneurs. We feel a tight bond with the entrepreneurs working each day to find the freedom and success that motivated them to start their businesses in the first place.

In the early days of our business, we experienced all of the monumental trials. We felt like quitting nearly every day. We were on the verge of personal bankruptcy, with health and relationship challenges that seemed too much to bear. But gradually, we began to discover the Six Keys to Success. It didn't happen quickly. It actually took many years. But once we discovered and practiced these keys, our business took off. And as we refined the keys over the years, we began teaching them to our customers, finding great satisfaction in *their* success. We want to spread that success to you.

A BETTER WAY OF LIFE FOR ENTREPRENEURS

In addition to our own experiences, 20-plus years of working with small business owners brought us to some simple but significant discoveries. We watched the same mistakes being made over and over again. We saw how small businesses achieved success as they applied the Six Keys. And we saw “success” on the outside covering up struggles on the inside. Sure, we saw the triumphs. But we also saw the trials and tragedies brought about by the chaos.

We call the personal tragedies “The Dark Side of Entrepreneurship.” Unfortunately, the nature of business is that it frequently whips the entrepreneur around, creating chaos that often leads to ugly results in the business and personal lives of entrepreneurs. These aren’t just unfortunate business consequences.

The personal consequences are dangerous and sometimes tragic: leading in the extreme to death, divorce, or destruction, and more commonly to depression, drinking, and drugs to cope with it all. Think I’m being too dramatic? Perhaps. Just know that, almost always, there is imbalance, neglect, and regret with respect to personal health, relationships, and finances. That is not okay and it needs to be addressed. Entrepreneurship is awesome. And we want you to enjoy it without experiencing the heavy toll it can take when the entrepreneur does not have life balance.

We’ve all seen ultra-successful entrepreneurs—from a business standpoint—who are not “winning” when it comes to family, friends, health, and personal balance. Well, it’s not just the high-profile entrepreneurs who suffer from this problem. Sadly, it’s common across the millions of entrepreneurs in the world. This imbalance is why I’m so passionate about the revised edition of *Conquer the Chaos*.

Over the years, we have learned that the keys to conquer chaos and build a successful business *and* life are not unique

to one industry, company, or business owner. Success is determined by practicing predictable, repeatable, simple actions. But not just any actions—the right actions.

We also learned over the years that success in business doesn't really matter if the entrepreneur's personal life is a mess. What's the point of more time, money, and control if you don't like yourself or your family resents you or your health is lousy? Balanced growth. Business *and* personal success—the kind of success that brings great fulfillment to the entrepreneur. That's what we want for entrepreneurs. Because if it's just about business success, well, it probably won't last long. And even if it does, it's not worth the personal regret that comes with it.

I've lived this balancing act as we grew our business from zero to over \$100 million in annual sales. I've been in countless masterminds, user groups, and conferences observing the very real struggle for business and personal success, brushing up against the Dark Side of Entrepreneurship too many times. I've made my share of mistakes in the balancing act, trust me. I've seen far too many friends err on the side of business success. And I know there's a better way. I know it. It is my mission in business to help entrepreneurs find that better way. This is why I'm so passionate about sharing this book with you.

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL REVOLUTION DEFINED

I'm also passionate about this because so many more people are joining the ranks of entrepreneurship. They need guidance to conquer the chaos and avoid the Dark Side of Entrepreneurship.

By the time you finish reading this chapter, 140 people will have started their own business. If you read the entire book straight through, another 2,000 business owners will have

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started a business. And that's in the United States alone. Entrepreneurship is exploding all around us. Once considered a profession for a few rare, risk-taking, perhaps eccentric souls, entrepreneurship is now a widely respected profession.

Certainly, as an entrepreneur, you've noticed the growing interest in business ownership. You have friends who are entrepreneurs. Perhaps a brother, aunt, or cousin has started a business. Your neighbor down the street owns her own business. And it seems like nearly everyone has a side hustle of some sort, gearing up for the point when they can quit the day job and go all in on their business.

At the time of this book's first publication 14 years ago, the entrepreneurial revolution had clearly started. But today, the revolution is in full force and has completely changed the landscape of the business world. What's driving the revolution?

For any revolution to occur, three factors must be present. (See Figure 1.1.) Within the last few years, the same factors that led to political revolutions made their way into the economy, creating fertile ground for the entrepreneurial revolution. These three factors are:

1. A loss of security
2. A power shift
3. The promise of something better

ANY REVOLUTION	AMERICAN REVOLUTION	ENTREPRENEURIAL REVOLUTION
Loss of Security	No Representation	Corporate Distrust
Power Shift	Continental Congress	The Internet
Promise of Something Better	The Declaration of Independence	The Overnight Success Story

Figure 1.1 The three elements of a revolution.

THE LOSS OF SECURITY: CORPORATE DISTRUST

In generations past, many folks spent their entire careers at a single company, retiring after 40 years of dedicated service to someone else. To these folks, long-term employment with the company was the safe, wise, stable thing to do. If you wanted to get ahead in life, you worked nine to five in a predictable and stable environment, your employer took care of you over the course of your career, and you received a nice retirement plan when it was time to call it quits.

Now, however, the days of loyal employment are over. Working 40 years for the same company is practically unheard of. College graduates don't expect to work for the same company their whole lives and workers of all ages want a variety of opportunities and career challenges. Corporations simply don't provide the safety and stability perceived by generations past. Furthermore, bad corporate behavior has created corporate distrust. Stories of corporate scandals, shareholder fraud, and downsizing are the norm, sowing the seeds of distrust and breeding cynicism toward corporations.

As a result of this corporate distrust, more and more workers are seeking ways to create their own stability. They start businesses from dorm rooms, spin up side hustles, and scan the market for opportunities to generate extra income. In short, due to corporate distrust, more and more workers are leaning toward entrepreneurship. And the second ingredient needed to create a revolution is what gives them ample opportunity.

THE POWER SHIFT: THE INTERNET AGE

If you had to sum up the one big thing driving the entrepreneurial revolution, it is the age of the Internet. In the past 20 years, the Internet changed everything, igniting the revolution. And now advanced web technologies on our phones are accelerating the revolution, completely shifting power to the individual.

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The Internet:

- Allows people to work from anywhere
- Gives open access to information and artificial intelligence
- Connects people and opportunities through social media
- Makes it possible for anyone to profit from their expertise
- Puts the power of automation in the hands of the little guy
- Lets entrepreneurs transact online, anywhere, anytime
- Opens up a global market our parents could never have imagined

And those are just a few of the ways the Internet age is shifting the power to the individual. For the entrepreneur, this shift in power puts small business ownership more easily within reach. It opens up a world of possibilities that simply weren't possible in the past.

So we love the Internet age. We love the value and opportunity it provides entrepreneurs. And we love the entrepreneurial revolution that is happening all around us because of it. But before we get carried away praising the Internet age, I'd like to issue one word of warning. As much as we love the Internet age, its technologies are a massive contributor to the chaos. More on that later.

THE PROMISE OF SOMETHING BETTER: THE OVERNIGHT SUCCESS STORY

Before we jump into the promise that sparks the revolution, let's do a little lesson in United States history. Trust me, this history lesson applies to the entrepreneurial revolution and it also applies to your specific business as an entrepreneur.

The Fourth of July, celebrated as Independence Day in the United States, is not the day the United States won its freedom. The American Revolution had only just begun on July 4, 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was signed.

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We celebrate the *declaration* in the United States, even though that declaration occurred long before independence was actually won.

Imagine that. More remembered than the day the colonists won their freedom is the day they declared their independence. I believe this is appropriate and significant because the colonists envisioned victory. They declared it. They called their shot. And that gave them a cause. It gave them hope. After all their frustration, fear, and pain, finally *they held the promise of something better*.

For the entrepreneurial revolution, the concept is the same. If corporate disillusionment provided the fuel and the Internet provided the means to start a revolution, then all that was left was to light the match. And the match—the spark that ignites the bonfire, the promise of something better—is a little thing called *the perceived overnight success story*.

People look at the stories of successful entrepreneurs and they see “overnight success.” They see all the benefits that come to a successful entrepreneur: time, money, control, impact, and freedom. But they don’t see the chaos, the journey, the struggle to build a successful business and a successful life.

Instead, they see the flexibility they crave and they resent their boss for not allowing it. They see the successful entrepreneur buy a new car or home and they feel a twinge of jealousy. They see the blossomed creativity entrepreneurs who advances their ideas in the market and they harbor feelings of resentment when their own ideas are not appreciated at work. They see entrepreneurs accomplishing their dreams and they kick themselves for not taking action when they “thought of that idea first.”

Corporate distrust, the Internet age, and the myth of the overnight success story are the forces that created the entrepreneurial revolution. More and more people are starting their own business, spurred by corporate distrust, empowered by

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the Internet age, and longing for their own overnight success story. All around us, aspiring entrepreneurs reach for the promise of something better, a promise that sounds like:

“I’ve always wanted to start a business; it’s time for me to pursue my dream.”

“Joe went for it and look at him now. If he can do it, I certainly can.”

“With all the layoffs around here, now’s as good a time as any.”

“I want the flexibility to work when I want and have more time with the family.”

“Honey, I just can’t take it anymore. I *have* to start my own thing.”

“I’ll start it on the side and build it up until I can afford to quit my job.”

“Let’s line up health insurance, get a little more in savings, and take the plunge.”

These are the conversations going on around us, fueling the entrepreneurial revolution. You probably said something like this yourself before starting your business. And if you haven’t staked out on your own yet, you *feel* the reality of these statements, don’t you?

THE COVID EFFECT

So the stage was set. The three factors had all combined to create revolutionary conditions. And the population responded by turning to small business ownership in droves. And then COVID-19 hit and turned this flame we call the entrepreneurial revolution into a roaring bonfire.

Over the past three years since COVID, businesses have been starting up at a record pace. COVID changed everything

and it turbo-charged each of the three characteristics that lead to a revolution:

1. **Corporate distrust** increased as macroeconomic factors shifted, remote work became the norm, employees reexamined their work lives, and employers scrambled to adapt to the changing environment by reducing costs and laying off employees. The Great Resignation became a thing as employees decided they wanted a better way of working.
2. **The Internet age** went to a new level during COVID. Web conferencing, digital marketing, automation, mobile technologies, and AI all advanced significantly, as lockdowns and remote work became necessary. The technologies created and popularized during the pandemic will continue to accelerate the entrepreneurial revolution.
3. **The overnight success story** is perhaps the factor that gained the most surprising surge during COVID. Of course, mainstream media still glamorizes the rags to riches stories. But the massive surge has come from social media, YouTube, podcasts, and other user-generated content sources that highlight entrepreneurial success. Everyone has a platform. The world had time to watch during the pandemic. And now it seems influencers and successful entrepreneurs are constantly in the spotlight.

With the entrepreneurial revolution in full effect, accelerated by COVID, record numbers of entrepreneurs are joining the ranks of small business ownership. And that is why this book is so crucial—to help entrepreneurs build a great business *and* a great life, without being swallowed whole by the chaos. To help more entrepreneurs avoid Mike Callahan's first story that we read above and achieve his second story.

To be clear, it is a *great* thing that so many people are turning to entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs make the world a better place, just as Abraham Maslow called out when he said:

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“The difference between the great and good societies and the regressing, deteriorating societies is largely in terms of the entrepreneurial opportunity and the number of such people in the society. I think everyone would agree that the most valuable 100 people to bring into a deteriorating society would be not 100 chemists, or politicians, or professors, or engineers, but rather 100 entrepreneurs.”

—Abraham Maslow

Maslow is famous for his Hierarchy of Needs. And he was right about the value of entrepreneurs in society. Now let's put those two concepts together as we look at the Quest for Success.

Chapter 1 Summary: The Entrepreneurial Revolution

- Entrepreneurship is attractive and exciting, providing an opportunity for wealth and freedom. But the chaos of running a business wreaks havoc in the lives of entrepreneurs. Both the struggling entrepreneur and the successful entrepreneur experience chaos.
- This book is about showing you a better way. This book shows you the way to build a great business and a great life.
- We are in an entrepreneurial revolution. Record numbers of people are starting businesses due to three factors:
 1. A loss of security—corporate distrust
 2. A power shift—the Internet age
 3. The promise of something better—the overnight success story
- These three factors were driving entrepreneurship in record numbers. And then COVID hit and the entrepreneurial revolution exploded.
- All of these entrepreneurs are eager to build a successful business, but the definition of success is unclear and the chaos of small business awaits them.