Introduction

Why do you want to grow your business? What do you want to achieve? What's your goal? This is not a frivolous question.

For example, when I wrote this book, my personal and business goal was to become client independent by the end of the year.

What I mean by that is that I wanted to be able to choose whether or not I worked with private clients as a copywriter. I wanted my continuity programmes, mentoring and training to become my core business.

Why?

For two reasons.

Firstly, I wanted to stop swapping my time for money. There are several very good reasons for this that will become abundantly clear as you read on.

Secondly, although I enjoy writing and creating marketing plans for my clients, what I really love is coaching small business owners and watching them achieve their successes. That's what fires me up.

Your reason why is crucial. Without it, without your vision and your goals, it will be very hard to motivate yourself. Your *why* gives you a reason to get up early, to work the long hours, to work harder and smarter than most other people are willing to do.

Without it, the pain and tears and frustration *will* be too much to endure. Without it, the early starts are too hard, the hours too long, the sacrifices too great.

So, let me ask you again: why are you reading this book?

A Little Background

Before we get going, I want to give you a bit of background, because it's relevant to how I ended up running my business the way I do now.

I started running my own business by accident.

In fact, I left an awful job with nothing else to go to, and I did it out of desperation. I also got to utter the immortal line: *"You can't fire me, because I QUIT!"* But that buzz only lasted for half an hour…

Looking back, I made a lot of mistakes at that job, and made my own life more difficult; I handled many situations atrociously; but it was an awful place and for whatever reasons, it made me miserable. In fact, it made me ill. I have always struggled with bouts of depression, and I was already on the slippery slope into the hole when I started that job.

Then I sank further. And life began to look less attractive than the alternative, for a while. I hated the person I'd become.

So, thanks to my wonderful husband — to whom I owe almost everything — I left before I broke completely. And decided that I needed to change. My life needed to change. Because you can and should run away from bad situations, but making a positive change always comes down to *you* in the end.

I realised the only way my life was going to change was if I changed it.

At which point a friend of mine offered me some freelance work, which I snapped up…

And then I thought, *"I've always wanted to run my own business. There'll never be a better time than this."*

So I did.

In the midst of deep and serious depression, stress, rage, fear, and doubt I started a business. I do not necessarily recommend that anyone else does it this way… but there's a lot to be said for being forced into a choice.

Anyway, I registered Sunflower Communication & Media Services Limited (yeah, total mouthful, I know) and got started.

What I got started *on* was a whole heap of valuable experience in the shape of various mistakes and false starts.

My lack of experience and my extreme lack of confidence led to me working long, hard hours for not a lot of money. And although that was fine for a little while, and I'm very grateful for the push and opportunity my friend Mike gave me, it was not in any way sustainable.

I had no idea what fees to charge, so I took what was offered, initially. Then I looked around at what other copywriters were charging, and picked a number somewhere in the middle (you'll discover in chapter 3 why that's a moronic way to set your pricing). Not too high, because I didn't have the 'experience'. (Oh what nonsense that is, and what a mistake!)

What I did have was a seemingly rare willingness to learn, to take advice, and to *practise*. I tested and measured. I found out what got results and what didn't. And I turned away from the dreadful corporate waffle that appears on about 95% of company websites.

After about a year, I had a fair few clients and I was just about bringing in enough money to pay the bills, but I had a problem.

I'm sure it's one that'll sound familiar to you.

With my business model as it was, I was limited. I was stressed. I was swinging between feast and famine, swapping time for money. In short: I had no way to go and I was not enjoying my new business.

Of course, I could put my prices up — and I did — but that's only a temporary fix. Swapping time for money is not scaleable. And I wanted scaleable. And better clients.

So I fired 90% of them.

Who This Book is For

This book is for people a wee bit like me. For people who are where I was a couple of years ago (or thereabouts). So, if you sound like any of the following, you're in the right place…

- Freelancers: copywriters, designers, web developers, artists, coaches, ghost writers, translators, tutors, consultants, authors…
- Other small business owners
- People who want to start a business
- People who don't have a plan — who just sort of fell into running their own business, much as I did
- People who've started their own business but aren't sure what to do next
- People who are struggling to grow their business
- People willing to work hard and invest time, effort and money into building their business
- People who are looking for a real-life, no-nonsense, practical guide for building and running a successful small business

Who This Book Is NOT For

If you think you might fall into one of the following categories, or even close to it, this book isn't for you. Please don't buy it. And if you've bought it, get in touch and ask me for a refund, I'll give you one gladly.

- People after a quick fix
- People who think they already know everything about running and marketing a small business
- People who think this won't work because *"my business is different"*
- People who own big, successful businesses (my approach won't necessarily be appropriate for you)
- Askholes (you know, people who keep asking the same question over and over again, hoping for an answer they like)
- People looking for a magic bullet, get-rich-quick scheme
- Freebie-seekers and cheapskates

If you're just starting out in your own business, or you're thinking of leaving your full-time job to go freelance, this book will give you all the tools and ideas you need to start your own business. Not everything I've done will necessarily apply to you, or be right for you; but you will be able to adapt almost everything to your own business.

When you've read this book, you'll be in a good position to decide if running your own business this way is for you.

If you already run a business and you feel like you're stuck in a rut and struggling to grow, frustrated and worried, you're in the position I was in a couple of years ago.

This book will give you a plan of action to adapt and follow for yourself.

How To Use This Book

Although each chapter contains plenty of standalone information you can dip in and out of, you'll get the best out of this book by reading it chronologically.

It walks you through what I've done in my own business, from struggling mess through woman on a mission right up to bursting into six figures and beyond.

You get my marketing system in a pocket-sized tree-based medium.

You'll realise that the ideas, tools and techniques I share with you are all applicable to your own business, and you'll start to come up with ideas for how you can use them yourself.

There are action points throughout, where I consider that you absolutely must do something.

You'll find exercises and suggestions where I think you'll find something useful.

I strongly encourage you to make notes in the book, highlight passages and pages, and re-read it as and when you need to. And, every time you come across an idea, ask yourself: *How can I use this in my business?*

Creating the type of business that I've built and am continuing to grow depends on bringing in a steady stream of qualified clients.

You'll discover, as you read this book, that by far the most important thing to me is building relationships with my clients. Because that's where the value is — for me *and* for them.

You might think you're just selling commodities; and that might be true — now. But it doesn't have to be true forever, and you should be looking at how to break free of the commodity label if you want to build the kind of business I *think* you want.

This book will help you to do that, from changing your mindset and the way you think about yourself and your business, right through to the practical actions you need to take to get there.

And I want to point something out, too. You'll have been told, as a child and a young person, that the secrets of success are to be clever and to work hard. But that's not entirely true.

If it were true, nurses and teachers would be rich, they wouldn't be overworked, and they'd be appreciated fully for what they do. I don't need to tell you that's not the case, for the most part.

The truth is, the world is full of successful people who became successful simply because they didn't allow fear to paralyse them. They took chances other people weren't willing to take. Remember what I said about luck? And about doing what others won't?

Another important point is this: successful people usually fail several times before they succeed. I've failed before. I'll fail again.

If you're one of my human readers, you'll have failed before too, and you *will* fail again. It's inevitable. It's a *good* thing. Because this is failure with small a 'f', not FAILURE, and you learn valuable lessons from failing. You don't learn a damn thing from success.

The real secret to success is never giving up. Getting back up in the face of mistakes, set-backs, and fuck-ups.

And having another go. Trying something else. Taking the chances that present themselves and to hell with the misgivings.

Hard work is important — really important, because you won't succeed without it. But hard work isn't enough on its own. Remember that.