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AUTHOR OF **SECRETS OF THE ZEN BUSINESS WARRIOR**

MILLIONAIRE BUSINESS CULTURE

7 Steps to Create an All-Star Team to Help
You Grow Your Business, Work Less,
and Enjoy What You Do More

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Dedication

For Tamara and Daniel.

I am so happy we are together again this time around.

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Chapter 1

Choose Wisely

“Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely.”

—Unknown

“I am at my wit’s end,” Eric said over a double shot of espresso at Starbucks.

I felt a wave of sadness and empathy wash over me, though I cannot say I was surprised. We had this type of conversation a few times over the past ten years since I first met him in a client/provider relationship and later became good friends over time – the type of friendship that is born out of mutual admiration, trust, working together, and accomplishing results in an easy and fun way. There was always camaraderie and an immediate feeling of some sort of kinship – perhaps it was the fact that we were both immigrants, working hard to accomplish *the dream* here in United States, the land of opportunities.

We had similar backgrounds: we both had a nice collection of diplomas hanging on our walls, and we both had a successful career in the corporate world for about ten years or so before we jumped to the entrepreneur world. We both had dreams of making it happen. He dreamed big. He played big. His favorite business motto was, “Small risk, small gain. Big risk, big gain.”

When Eric decided to go into business, he did it big time, and there was no reason why he could not; after all, he was not only highly intelligent, but street-smart, always resourceful. He had a magnetic personality, and above all, he got things done. Always. And he had capital to play with, both from his personal account and from investors.

He was in the software industry and he came up with the idea to build a platform to develop and run apps. When he explained it to me for the first time about ten or more years ago, honestly, I could not understand a thing. It was way beyond the common knowledge of everyone at the time. I did not know what an app was, and I remember simply asking him why a website was not good enough to do all that he was explaining it could do. He said this platform and his apps could do things much better, and definitely faster. If only we saw in a crystal ball how apps would transform everybody’s lives!

And on he went. He started with a fantastic office with a great view in the business center of the city. He hired six-figure employees right from the beginning; he did not have time to waste and, as he said to me then, he was hiring people “who had been there, and have done that,” and that, of course, cost money. It was a calculated risk, he said, but they were all A-team players. All of them on-boarded with a very high base salary and a nice bonus structure.

He hired experts to help him put together all his sales, marketing, administration, and project software, all integrated. His website was absolutely astonishing – the best graphic design and functionality. He participated in all the main exhibits and fairs in his industry, and his stand was always one of the most visited. He had a hands-on experience in the booth, mind-blowing for people who had no idea of the power behind an app to make clients happier and hooked in the service and support it could deliver.

Then, slowly but surely, the shine began to fade after the first twenty-four months. Sales did not cover even 50% of fixed cost. Stress turned into daily bitter arguments and finger-pointing among the bigshots hired. There was no genuine collaboration among team members; they were there to just do the job they were paid to do, and whoever else did not perform as expected was getting in the way, which created a business culture of mistrust and recriminations.

Bonuses were not given since sales quotas were not met, so after the twelve-month mark, some of the bigshots left. Eric told me how many times he tried to retain employees, even promising a bigger bonus if they did not quit, but they did not care enough for the company; they only cared about themselves. Investors were disappointed and kept a short leash and making ends meet was very difficult. Work was brutal; sixteen hours a day was the norm for Eric. He was working insane hours and he was travelling to raise capital and to do sales pitches to the company’s biggest sales prospects.

We talked every now and then, and there was always something going terribly wrong. One of the partners stole money; for a two-year period, Eric was in legal battle with one vendor for negligence that cost them a few of their most important accounts; one of the investors sued them; and on and on went the stories. For me, it was always stomach-churning when I got off the phone.

Eric felt alone most of the time, even though at one point he had close to thirty direct employees. He had to be there all the time to oversee that things were moving in the right direction. He had not taken a vacation in years, and it was slowly eroding his health and vitality. He felt tired

most of the time, and he slept only four to five hours a night. He knew it was a ticking bomb... but what else could he do? He had to continue; he could not quit.

There were sporadic winnings that gave him a space to breathe for sure: a great account here and there that would allow him to buy time to continue his trial and error in building the right team that would truly make a difference for his company. He believed that he had to work harder, and he had to hire people who believed the same thing: that a whatever-it-takes attitude conquers all obstacles.

Time flew by, and ten years later we were having that cup of coffee and he was still struggling. But now he was married to a wonderful woman and had two small children, who hardly saw him, and when he was home with them, he was always exhausted or on the phone. Many times, he came home late with guilty feelings, always telling himself, *“I am working hard to provide the best for them. I know it will be worth it at the end.”*

He downsized everything and was trying to give his business a new jumpstart by focusing his product on a niche. Now, he went even deeper in financial debt; he gave everything to this business endeavor, sinking in all his savings as well as investments from his family, friends, and, of course, the angel investors who already invested about ten million dollars since the beginning.

At some point he looked at me, paused his story, and asked me, “How did you do it?”

“Do what?” I asked. (In my mind, I was a million miles away from his dream of becoming one of the few Latin billionaires in the market.)

“Build the business you have and have the life you have.”

I paused, and for a moment my heart filled with immense gratitude as I placed, on a mental scale, our last almost twenty years. It hit me with such clarity that I had tears in my eyes when I answered him:

“I chose happiness from the very beginning.”

The most significant thing I have done in my journey as an entrepreneur is to learn how to build a company based on a culture that inspires each individual from within. Because they want to grow, they want to excel personally and professionally, and most importantly, they want to belong to a team that shares a common purpose.

I wanted that in my life to begin with. It was first a very personal choice, to be happy, to feel good in the grinding day-to-day of the hard work that building a successful business entails.

Then, this personal choice I made to be happy evolved little by little into something I needed to share and live every day in our business with our team for it to become a breathing reality.

I want to make something very clear to you from the very beginning: I believe happiness and money are a byproduct of something much bigger – your purpose. And that is what we are going to be deciphering for you throughout this book. So, whenever I speak about being happy, I want you to know it is not about a nice little fuzzy feeling that is fleeting, which for most people comes and goes depending on external stimulus. When I speak about happiness, I mean a state of alignment with who you really are, what you stand for and where you are going in life. When you find this out and you are able to live it and carry it to your business and your employees, you will be living your purpose; you will be in alignment; you will feel inspired, motivated, and passionate; and the economic rewards you are looking for will become a reality. Hint: *Your passion is for you. Your purpose is for others.*

A team with a common purpose is a highly functional team that will help you accomplish your dreams. You will never feel you are rowing against the current alone, and many times you will have real friends with whom to share your winnings.

Before we get started, I want you to know that building this highly functional team and a culture based on happiness will be the hardest thing you will do. It will require time, patience, and discipline. But once you do it, the rewards will blow you away. Life will never be the same.

Chapter 2

From There to Here

The Zero Hour

“Everything happens for a reason and that reason is there to assist me.”

—T. Harv Eker

I was fired from my job.

It was March 31, 2002.

It was the worst thing that could have happened to me then, and it was also the best thing that ever happened in my life.

It was the end of my perfect bubble life and the beginning of an incredible journey that brought me here and now.

And I know the best is yet to come.

A Shoe Box with Medals

My dad tells me I used to play with a box full of medals when I was about seven years old – medals that he was awarded during his days as a student in elementary and high school. They used to award the best students in each subject with gold and silver medals, and he had two boxes filled with them.

I remember playing with the medals as I would listen, mesmerized by his story, about how he would walk back and forth several times to the stage to be awarded with the medals by his teachers and principal – the tinkling sound of so many medals against each other when he was walking down the aisle, the look of pride in his dad’s eyes, how happy his mom looked.

As a seven-year-old girl, I was hooked. I wanted to do the same. I wanted to feel like “the winner.” I wanted to have the recognition and I wanted to make Daddy proud.

And I did.

I became a straight-A student during my school years. I was even exempted from taking the finals many times in all subjects. University and MBA were about the same – I graduated with

a degree in Business Administration with a double major in Management and Marketing. I love reading and learning new things, so studying came easy to me and was even fun – I know I sound like a nerd, and I probably was, considering that many times when asked what I wanted as a gift, I would choose books of all kinds!

I was born in Colombia, but my parents were already living abroad. So, for my first twenty-three years of life, I lived with them in different countries in Central America, and later spent ten years in Asia during my university years. We never lived in Colombia during that time, just came to visit our family every summer. Being exposed to living in different countries, cultures, people, and languages and travelling were always a priority for my dad. I had a privileged childhood in a loving and nurturing home. I was blessed.

My dad was a top ex-pat executive for one of the biggest agro-industrial companies in the world. I watched him give thirty years of his life as an employee to this company, only to end up with a crappy pension, and this taught me two prized life lessons:

1. Work hard and you will be promoted.
2. Do not bet your future on anything you do not have direct control of.

Both lessons proved to be valuable, the first one in my professional career, and second one as a business owner.

Beautiful Bubble

When I was twenty-three years old, I arrived in Medellin-Colombia to live there for the first time in my life. Since my parents were both Colombian, I was ready and beyond happy to begin a life in what I always considered my city. Many summer vacations placed the city in my fondest memories.

I landed on my feet, as people like to say in my city.

Even though I didn't have local work experience and didn't know anyone who could refer me or recommend me, I was hired by the largest lingerie company in Latin America, Leonisa S.A. I worked with them for three wonderful years, where I learned a lot about marketing and publicity.

Most importantly, I learned how it felt to work in a safe and family-oriented environment; Leonisa was in business for forty years when I joined, and it still exists twenty years later. I know it must be due to its nurturing and beautiful people-oriented business culture.

Without looking for a new job, an opportunity knocked on my door to work for ACES S.A., a beloved Colombian airline, as their frequent flyer program director. There, I tested myself and implemented large projects. It was a time of a lot of work, but the awesome content of my job and the absolute progress that I felt and witnessed in everything I did in the short span of twelve months kept me motivated and eager for more.

Then came the company that made the biggest impact in my professional life: Orbitel S.A., a telecommunications company that was born to compete with the monopoly when the market was legally open. I was one of the founding employees and I got to work with world-class consultants in the implementation of a mass market telecommunications company, from business planning to launching in the span of ten months. It was beyond exciting!

But aside from the vast array of experiences and knowledge I received, it was the huge amount of contrast I lived in that company that marked me and shaped many of the future decisions which transformed my life.

“Everything happens for a reason ... and that reason is always there to assist you.” This quote reads and sounds nice... until it happens to you.

We only remember the most beautiful or the ugliest things in life. It is how our brain works. Ordinary and average events, or things or people that do not strike our attention in our daily experiences, are quickly forgotten. When you are fully present, observing something sublime that you recognize as such, or when you are experiencing or witnessing something that goes against everything you value and appreciate, you will not forget.

During my first five years in Orbitel S.A. Colombia, I worked as a fulfilled, happy, appreciated individual who became an engaged, motivated, resourceful, and highly productive employee. We had a clear purpose from our president, we had a cause, and we all felt proud to belong to it. The way people treated each other was aligned with the values of the leader and the company as a whole. Salaries were excellent... but deep satisfaction, belonging, and happiness were a much bigger pay. This was the perfect example of a business culture centered around employees first to guarantee happy customers. And this came before anyone was talking about happiness as a business model philosophy fad of the moment.

For that reason, and due to my deeply ingrained “work hard, get results, and you will get promoted” belief, I was promoted and sent to Florida, U.S., to open Orbitel’s first international office.

It was a different territory, a different leader, different rules, and a totally different approach to employees. It was a focus on “the business plan comes first” at whatever the cost. And, well... the cost was me.

Working the hours was never the problem – it was a start-up and I love new projects with their challenges. Results were not the problem – we floored the oldest competitors in the local market and became the first option for our target market. Sales were through the roof.

But I lived the total opposite of my experience in Colombia.

Here, 1,400 miles away, I had never felt more miserable in a job or wanted so badly to quit and could not. How could I, if my husband quit his job in Colombia to follow me in this new life project? I had never failed at anything in my life, and quitting felt like failure. Would I quit now? Never.

This was me in a nutshell back then: “I’d rather die than quit,” and I was quite literally on my way there. I lost a lot of weight, could not sleep, did not eat well, did not have time to exercise, and became a coffee and Red Bull junkie who was on the verge of an emotional breakdown.

And then I was fired.

At the moment it happened, I could not believe it. I gave tears, blood, and sweat to this company – how could this be happening to me? We never got along, that is how.

Our personal values and principles were on different ends. We both wanted the same results for the company, but how to get there was in complete opposite directions.

You see, I believe that “the end does not justify the means,” and my boss at the time believed the total opposite, which led to constant arguments and weariness for both ends. So, it did happen, and I got fired just a few days before the renewal of my visa. That meant I had to leave the country in less than sixty days, or I would become illegal. I was jobless and so was my husband; now out of a working visa too, that was adding insult to injury in the worst possible way.

I never felt angrier or more bitter in my life. It felt hot and raw inside of me. Feelings of utter disbelief, even embarrassment, ran rampant. I knew full well there was nothing to feel embarrassed about, but I still felt like a failure. It was the lowest point of my professional career, at least ego-wise. And the best thing that could have happened to me.

Contrast is beautiful... in hindsight.

***“Once upon a time there was a little girl and all she wanted
was to be happy.”***

And that is exactly how the next chapters of my life were written. Out of a painful experience came the desire to be happy. That’s it, in a nutshell. No corporate-sounding BS, no marketing gimmicks or deep philosophy or some juju universe peace and love stuff (which I love, too).

I asked myself, “*What do I want now?*” And the answer was, “*To be happy.*”

My husband and I translated that to our day-to-day, infusing our life and our business – where we spent most hours of the day – with strategies to turn our business culture into one of income growth, happiness, and fun as our goals for us and our employees.

I remember the first decision we made was to surround ourselves with individuals who valued the importance we placed on being happy at work as a priority, and incredibly not everyone felt this was a priority. Some people still thought that “work is work and is not supposed to be fun or I am happy when I am with my family and friends only,” particularly those in middle management. So, at the beginning, we did many things out of “gut feeling” – what felt good and aligned to what we wanted – and then, little by little, through trial and error, it evolved into something that today has a body, heart, and a soul: *our business culture Delivering Happiness at Familia Alo*. Do not get me wrong, sales growth and profitability was, and is, our top priority in our business. But parallel to this is our quest for happiness while we are getting there.

Have you heard this powerful phrase??, “The quality of your life is directly proportional to the quality of your questions.”

Well, we asked the questions, and the answers arrived through others who asked the same questions and had arrived to our dream destination. Our teachers and mentors were our books, business coaches, seminars, and camps.

“*Success leaves clues.*” So true. Why take the longer road of trial and error when you can follow the steps of who succeeded in the way you want to succeed? It is so much easier and less costly in the long run. Yes, you need to make an investment both in time and money, but I can guarantee you, you will get your investment back tenfold. I say this from my own experience.

A Promise

I made a promise to myself that I would find and learn the way to have a safe, nurturing, fun environment as the foundation for our business culture to create an outstanding high-performance team of individuals who would help me get to the goals we all desire. And most importantly, I promised myself that we would enjoy our journey there. *Life is what happens while you are planning it*, and no amount of financial success and recognition equals the happiness you feel when you are fulfilled, when you feel you belong and really matter as an individual.

I knew that taking care of our people would mean happy customers, there was no doubt in my mind. I had already been witness to that during my past work experiences.

Little did I know that in pursuing happiness as a business culture, I would be fulfilling a bigger purpose of my life: to help other business owners how to create extraordinary all-star teams that will help them grow their businesses and make their dreams a reality – whatever those dreams may be, whether it is working less hours, traveling around the world, having a scalable system that allows their company to thrive without their full involvement, making a difference in other people's lives or choosing to live more.

I think this is the perfect moment to ask you one of the questions I ask myself most and one I always ask my clients and audiences every time I get to speak in public: *What does success look like to you?*

It appears to be a simple question and you could very well jump into telling me a list of things you would like to be doing, or perhaps fantastic things you would like to own or maybe even people you would love to be involved with.

When you have a very clear idea of what success looks like to you, you will be very careful about the choices you make every day that could bring you farther or closer to your very own picture of success. For example, if you imagine success as having a close relationship with your spouse, how does traveling constantly, working excessive hours, and being always stressed help you get closer to that particular goal?

Define what is most important in your life as an individual, then make the choices to convert your business into the vehicle to get there – and enjoy the ride, of course! Developing your business into a well-oiled machine of making money and a source of personal fulfillment is not difficult; it only takes you to stop and really assess where you need help, to evaluate your own capabilities with an honest heart, to make the decision and take actions consistently, moving

forward little by little, until at some moment the forward motion gets momentum and then, *boom!* You get an exponential jump – the ones you sometimes see happening to others and may have thought were just good luck.

It was not good luck – I can guarantee you, they were taking actions forward consistently, even in spite of fear, because that is what being courageous means: *taking actions in spite of fear.* And then, to the eyes of all external people, the business all of a sudden takes off! That can also happen to you.

And I know it because it happened to me too.

I love my life. I am very proud of the life I have now. I truly believe I deserve it because I have created it little by little with consistent steps.

I love that, on a daily basis, I feel peace, clarity, joy, fulfillment, excitement, gratitude, and certainty (and uncertainty too, which keeps me on my toes sometimes!).

I think personal and business success are measured in how you feel every day.

I am immensely grateful to have and enjoy many of the things that people write down when asked what success looks like to them. I enjoy excellent health and vitality. I am my doctor's worst client – he only sees me once a year for my yearly check-up! But I really believe my routine of daily meditation, yoga on a regular basis, my thirty-minute prime my day routine (which can be meditation, exercise, gratitude journaling, intention prayers, or listening to a personal growth speaker who inspires you), good eating habits (nothing extreme!), and especially working consciously toward feeling good every day tips the scale big time. I feel good, and in return, my body expresses exactly how I feel.

I've had a beautiful, fun, and deeply connected relationship with David, my husband, during the past twenty years. It is doubly merited because we have been working together in the same company for the past seventeen years; many times it was not easy, but from the moment we decided we wanted to grow as individuals, we wanted happiness in our daily life, and we wanted to make a lot of money in our business, that made our common goal as a couple crystal clear. *You do not need to know how you will get there, but you do need to know where you are going and especially how you want to live your life while you reach your desired destination.*

We have been blessed with two healthy, happy, and well-balanced children: Tamara, who is fourteen years old, and Daniel, who is twelve years old. On top of their personal and academic achievements at such young ages, I am the proudest to be able to say that we are friends, that we

love, trust, and admire each other. They too hold me accountable for living in integrity, to think, talk, and act congruently.

I love new experiences and travelling around the world has allowed our family to experience diverse cultures. We've met and share beautiful experiences with amazing people as different as a multiple Emmy award winner in New York City to a humble farmer in Hoi-An welcoming us to his house for a meal, and our children can now appreciate contrast more than ever. We've had crazy, adrenaline-filled adventures off the beaten path (we all are nature and animal lovers) in fantastic, fun-filled, and exotic places all over the world during the past years. In 2015, we were able to live for five months in Europe. We both worked and traveled around. We visited seven different countries and forty-six cities. 2015 was the closest to a sabbatical year we've had, and it was an unforgettable experience for our family. All this was made possible because our company is a well-oiled machine made of wonderful individuals who care.

Financial abundance and peace of mind for our future and our children's future are the cherry on top. Even if we started with financial abundance as our main objective seventeen years ago, as we started to place in the scale what was really important, we learned to focus on how we were "millionaires" already: loving our lives the way they were, appreciating what we had (even when our bank accounts were far from filled), searching for joy within, and searching for ways to be happier and feel good everyday led us to make decisions and take actions accordingly.

And at the heart of all of this: our business, our team, and our business culture, *Delivering Happiness at Familia ALO*.

Our business gives me the freedom to choose what I want to do and when I want to do it – I can even choose where I want to do it from. We have a team of extraordinary individuals who make things happen, who have helped me and my husband live a wonderful life – and in return, their lives, too, are better for working at our company. A company where they feel appreciated, cared for, and admired for who they are first and then for what each brings professionally to the team.

Do not get me wrong, there are challenges big and small in day-to-day situations, yes. But I never get stuck there for long periods of time, chewing a situation over and over with stress and anxiety. I now have the knowledge and tools to step out of that mindset quickly and move forward, and when I don't do it "right," that is okay too. It is part of living life to the fullest, both with successes and failures.

It was not easy. There were many ups and downs, many great disappointments, failures, and losses... but I would not change any of that. They made me who I am today: an individual who is enormously grateful for who I have become in the journey, and who is 100% conscious that growing and learning are a constant process in my daily life, and one who always looks forward with giddy anticipation of great things to come!

It is living what I teach in this book that holds me accountable, first to myself and then to others.

Many times, I still make mistakes and fail. I am not by far a perfect being (that would be sooo boring!). But what is most important is that I am now conscious of those missteps. I first forgive myself, pat myself on the back, and say, *“It is okay, you are where you are supposed to be, you are who you are supposed to be at this exact moment.”*

Every day is a new day, a fresh one, where you can start no matter what happened yesterday. Don't forget that. It so simple, yet so transformative, if you really contemplate how the sun rises every day and brings new life to all.

So can you.

Make every day a new day – the first day of the rest of your life, as the saying goes.

Chapter 3

Who is Lina and How Can This Book Help You?

“The longest journey you will make in your life is from your head to your heart.”

—Sioux legend

First and foremost, I am an entrepreneur, just like you are.

I have been in your shoes for the past seventeen years, and I know how hard it is to have the courage to open your own business, to compete in such cutthroat markets, to have the determination and mental stamina to keep going, and to deal with so many things in your day-to-day.

If things are good, it is due to teamwork; if things are bad, it is the shortcomings of the leader. Leading is the most ungrateful job of them all, especially during the first five years. Because no matter how hard you work and try, it is impossible to keep everyone happy.

Tough decisions need to be made, and some of them do not make people happy.

It is difficult to balance having a good work environment while at the same time being 100% focused on results. The need to be on top of everything can easily turn a person into “the boss,” and when you become “the boss,” you will have employees who do not think, they are just paid to do what you tell them to do. Plain and simple.

So, if you are the sole generator of the good ideas, how will you grow? Your business needs to become a well-oiled high-performance machine so you can scale up. “You are as strong as your weakest link.” This becomes very evident in your business, especially if you are a small business owner. *You will grow as far as you can get great people to help you.* This belief will drive your business forward; disregard or minimize it, and you will only grow and sustain your growth up to the point of your *current* capabilities.

You need smarter individuals than you to help you. You need better skilled individuals than you to help you. *And you need to become attractive for them to want to come and work with you – and stay with you.*

Not everyone is cut out to be a business owner. It is hard, and the hardest part will always be about people, personal relationships, and your role as a leader – heck! – becoming the leader.

It is not an easy road to take, particularly because it will demand you to be very strong emotionally and mentally. That is the reason why “over 80% of businesses close before their fifth year and only 4% will still remain by their tenth year.” *Remain*, not thrive.

My goal with this book is to stir you up, inspire you, and give you the knowledge and the tools to take immediate, deliberate control of how you are creating the business culture that you need to have in order to love working with your team, empowering them, and leading them to a common cause that fills their hearts with the desire to become more. I would like every person who reads this book to feel inspired and directed to action, actions that are not complex nor hard to take.

Complexity is the enemy of execution. That is why this book is written in a sequence that will allow you to understand first with your mind, then with your powerful heart, and will allow you to take action by following my *7 Steps to Create an All-Star Team to Help You Grow your Business, Work Less and Enjoy What You Do More.*

Yes, I will say this again in other terms: You will transform your life beyond your wildest dreams if you follow these steps. Hopefully your mind is churning now; hopefully you are having some excitement. And you may have some doubts, too – that is perfectly fine at this moment.

The most dangerous words a person can say are, “*I know that.*” These three words stop growth, stop expansion, stop interaction, stop new ideas from flowing, stop innovation. Pretty soon these words will make you obsolete in all aspects of your life.

Besides, we don’t really “know something” just because we heard it at a great seminar, we read it in an amazing book, or we learned the concepts at a university. We only really know something when we live it, when we have become it, when it is part of our ingrained beliefs, which in turn has everything to do with how we view the world around us.

7 Steps to Grow your Business, Work Less, and Enjoy What You Do More

There is a world of difference between *one day* and *day one*.

This, my friend, is your *day one*. You made a decision, took action, and now are about to embark on the extraordinary journey to take your business to a level you have only dreamed about.

One of financial abundance for sure, but most important to your life, one of waking up excited and looking forward to working side-by-side with an extraordinary group of individuals who, together, will make a real difference. And guess what will come naturally? Enjoying the day-to-day and deriving extraordinary fulfillment from it as well. Making a *real difference* is not about *what* you do – it is about *how* you do it.

The following is a brief description of each of the seven steps that you and I will be focusing on over the next pages. Each of the steps is designed to build on the previous one. That way, at the end of the book, you will not only have a very clear understanding of these life-changing concepts presented throughout the book, but you will also have applied them to your particular life and work situation. Yes, this is not a “just read” book. This is a “hands-on” book for you to do, to take action, and to move forward.

Let’s begin.

Step 1: Know Where You Really Are and Dare to Dream Your Future

Everything we do in life is in the attempt to feel better than what we are feeling now.

But sometimes things do not work quite as planned and we need to take a brief pit stop, evaluate, correct, and continue. This is particularly true in your business, but how will you trace your next steps if you do not have a very clear idea where you *really* are and where you *really* need to be? And most determinant, *who do you need to become* to get there and sustain it?

It is not a sprint, it’s a journey.

Step 2: The Power of Your Story

Is your personal story the wind behind your sails or the anchor that weighs you down?

How we view the circumstances and events in our lives and how we give meaning to them determines our character and our characters determine our future.

Step 3: When Profits Meet Passion and Purpose

How do you *sustain* your actions *until* you reach your goals? That is the key that separates those who make it and those who don’t.

The only way is if you have your personal fire on all the way through. And for you to be able to do this, you need to know *why you do what you do*. Your personal purpose permeates your business purpose. This is the key that will keep you and your team intrinsically motivated so actions do not feel like a burden and overwhelming. They, on the other hand, will fill you with passion and joy.

Step 4: Your All-Star Team – Finding and Hiring Extraordinary Individuals

You need help to create a successful business, you already know that.

You need highly skilled, resourceful, and motivated individuals on board. In order to hire highly attractive individuals, you need to become highly attractive to them first. How you accomplish this will determine your odds of creating your all-star team, which will help you make your dreams a reality (and theirs, too!).

Step 5: Progress Equals Happiness

Progress, feeling that you are advancing toward your goals, is one of the most exhilarating feelings of all. You feel that everything is working out for you, you feel things are in alignment, and they invariably get momentum of results forward.

Everyone who feels progress in life feels happier. It is fundamentally determinant that you understand the power of this concept and create strategies in your company to work around perceived progress for your employees if you want to keep them motivated, productive and fulfilled.

Step 6: Integrity and Communication

“What you think, say. What you say, do.” Integrity is the signature of a leader.

But it is not enough for you live your life in integrity in your business arena. You need to be able to articulate and communicate what you stand for and your vision to your employees, clients, and vendors in a consistent and permanent way. It has to become a very important part of your business system.

Step 7: Business Models to Speed Up Freedom

Most likely you went into business to:

1. Make lots of money.
2. Be your own boss.

Now, maybe you have been in business for a few years (maybe even a decade or more) and maybe you have not yet reached either or both initial goals. Being your own boss means you don't feel tied to your business for it to operate on a daily basis.

In this chapter, I will share two business strategies that allowed me to reach both goals. I will only encourage you to view them as a possibility with an open mind, because I know from experience they can transform not only your business but your life as well.

How to Get the Most Out of This Book: Becoming *the Master*

This book will walk you through my 7 Steps. It will take you through a guided map comprised of the three levels designed to give you mastery of anything you choose to excel at.

And mastery means going deep. Like I said before, you don't know it until you become it, until you have mastered it. So, let's review the levels. They are a guide to your map. This is how the Steps are meant to be taken and lived out in your real, day-to-day life.

The Three Levels of Mastery

Cognitive understanding is your ability to understand a concept. Any person who reads or hears a concept can get it; it is only information. It is not rocket science. This is just the first step to pave your highway to the life you want. You may find yourself saying, "I know this," or you may find yourself in an "a-ha moment" reading something put a certain way for the first time in your life and loving it. Still, this is just your first step and it is where 95% of the people stay.

Emotional mastery. Here is where the magic begins. In this step, you will arouse your emotions, your deep-seated feelings about what you want, and what you definitely don't want in your life – your desires, hungers, fears, concerns. When you are exposed to the information, to the concepts, with enough repetition, you will feel stimulated to ask, to experiment, to try, to move forward, to act. Here is where you make the commitment to stick to anything new in your life – to form new habits, to do the work it requires. Still, New Year's resolutions belong to this step:

wanting something to really change, but most of the time not making it part of your life through consistent new habits or actions.

The ultimate mastery: the physical mastery. That means you don't have to think about what you do; your actions are second nature; it becomes part of you because you developed it into a *habit*. And the only way to get to a habit stage is through consistent repetition. "*Repetition is the mother of all skills,*" Tony Robbins constantly tells us. You can acquire any skill through repetition, even happiness and joy. This is a thing that I like to call *the muscle of happiness*.

This book was written with the intention to guide you step-by-step to evaluate the concepts and actions that have worked for me and thousands of others. At the end of each chapter, it will require you to become a more active participant.

This is a journey of a lifetime, but I invite you to start here.

Know that if you are here it is not a coincidence, it is a sign of you asking for more and getting answered. How you turn that into a reality is all up to you.

You will come to realize that you only need to take little steps, with consistent repetition, to have a quantum leap.

If you are with me, let's make this the first step from intention to decision to action!

Here we go. I will be with you every step of the way. Feel my voice. Follow my lead.

Chapter 4

Step 1 – Know Where You Really Are and Dare to Dream

Your Future

“Clarity is power.”

— Unknown

We do this process every single day. You do it, I do it.

You get your GPS and you look up a place you need to go, enter the address, and press go. It immediately tells you different routes, it recommends the fastest one or, if you prefer, it will recommend a route without highways. It will even tell you how many miles you have to go and will show you what traffic looks like. And it works wonderfully because from the very beginning you knew exactly your point of departure and your final destination.

This is nothing new to you. You do it every single day in your mundane errands.

When you buy a new appliance, from the moment it is in the box, packed and dismantled, to having it fully operational and helping you do something faster or better, there is always a manual that provides you a clear step-by-step on how to do it and you follow it (most of the time!). And it works wonderfully because, from the very beginning, you knew you bought the appliance to do a specific task you had in mind.

When you decide to be adventurous and want to try a new recipe, you will see a beautiful and yummy picture. You may even anticipate how delicious it tastes by the looks of it. You then check the recipe’s instructions, buy the necessary ingredients, mix them, cook them, and finally have a delicious meal on your table. Once again, in this example, you went from scratch to a finished result. You translated your intention into a decision, you took action, and got results. And once again, it worked great because you knew exactly what recipe you wanted – you did not begin with lasagna in mind and end up with tacos on your table, right?

You made a decision based on knowing very clearly what you wanted, and from that moment on, you took the necessary steps to get to the end result, correcting along the way if necessary but always with the end in mind that kept you going in a very clear direction. And you

did not give up halfway through it, simply because you needed to adjust a bit here and there, yes? You did not get the lasagna out of the oven halfway through the cooking time, right?

You do these mundane activities in your daily routine without giving them much thought. After all, nothing terribly wrong could happen if on your way to your new doctor's office you missed one turn, right? You just need to realize you made the wrong turn and get back to the highlighted route, and you would not make a big deal out of it, correct? If you do this unconscious process on the most basic errands of the day-to-day stuff of your life with complete clarity and certainty, to be able to change anything from a present state of being to one that you believe is better, why is it that sometimes you watch as days turn into years and years turn into decades and *really important things like your business* just seem to roll forward by inertia, conquering some mountains and surviving some valleys there for sure, but nothing really of significance happening?

Why?

Very simple: Because most people do not make the decision to move forward in a different direction.

Why?

Because they do not know exactly where that forward place is that they want to go. The real issue here: Before people *can actually make a decision*, they need to ask themselves an even more basic question: "*What do I want?*" or "*Where am I going?*"

Most people struggle with these seemingly simple and basic questions. I invite you to test it. Ask three people at random and watch them get uncomfortable. Maybe they will mumble a few politically correct answers, some vague and general idea of a better future, but nothing really concrete. After a little more prodding from you they will just say, "*Mmm ... okay, good question, let me think about it.*"

Don't you wonder sometimes how some very successful individuals and their businesses constantly seen in the media have apparently done it so fast, so big, and so effortlessly? How did they take a business from zero to millions of dollars? And sometimes it is not even the Bill Gateses of the world – sometimes you see a friend of yours have a business that simply skyrockets after a few years in the market... but on your side of the fence, maybe you feel like you have been working so hard for so long and you may be even feeling that your business has grown but is definitely not there quite yet.

Do you want to know how I know this may be your case? What are the *clear* telltales? Because here are the things I hear most often from my clients: *“I feel overwhelmed and I am tired. I don’t have time; I need more hours in a day. I need to make more money, grow my business. I can never be fully disconnected on vacation. I need to spend more quality time with my family. I don’t have a vision for my company. I am just not as passionate as I used to be.”*

Most people think they need more time, more employees, more money for their business to grow ... when in reality what they don’t have is a crystal-clear vision of what they really want out of their lives and where exactly they want to take their business. If you feel overwhelmed daily, it is because you feel there are just not enough hours in one day, and I can tell you for sure right now that this is because you do not know your clear and precise destination. You do not know without a doubt where you are going.

If you do not know where you are going, you will spend a lot of time doing things that may not be directly taking you closer to your dreams: to growing your business, increasing your income, and enjoying more of life. That is a very high price to pay for not having a clear and pristine destination for your life.

All the success stories you know about have one thing in common: *clarity*. They know what they want, they know where they are going, and they were able to clearly articulate it, both in their minds and, most powerfully, in meaningful words so they can inspire their team to dream and take action toward a common cause.

I remember when we started our telecommunications business, the first seven years of business were just good: our business was growing steadily, we had new clients every month, and the recurring base was very stable. We had already a small team of people who could take care of the nitty gritty operations.

I remember our goal was to make money, to be able to pay ourselves salaries, pay our employees and vendors, and have some working capital left to invest and grow the company. That sounded like a good plan, one without too much risk, because after all, we valued our quality of life and sensed that doing without owning any working capital would give us the most peace of mind.

But the goal every month back then was explicitly to make x amount of sales that we defined was the “least” we could be making to cover all our expenses and make that little extra to re-invest, and we used to say to ourselves and to our team: *“Anything that we make after that*

amount will be fantastic.” And guess what? For exactly one year, we watched every month how we made exactly the same amount, with a variance of 10% to 15% more or less, of the “*least expected in order to be good.*”

And don’t get me wrong... we were not just complacent with ourselves, we were not “just taking the easy ride.” We were working hard in all aspects to grow our business, but we did not have a clear vision of where we were really going and how we wanted to get there, because as obvious as it seems, you do get what you ask for – every time.

The slow growth, minuscule returns, and lack of clarity was a lesson well learned, paid for in the most expensive of all currencies: time.

Time is life. Your life.

And you are here because you have come up with the same conclusion and you are now looking for ways to have more time and enjoy your life to the fullest, right now. Not only during the weekends, not only during your vacations, and certainly not waiting until retirement.

The Naked Truth

Before we move on to our first step, which is to know exactly where you are going, I am going to ask you to be very truthful and honest with yourself. This is not the time to color it pink, nor is it the time to make it worse than it is.

Just like knowing where you are going is important, so too is it important to know where you are right now – what your starting point is.

I truly believe in this powerful and life-changing phrase: “*The quality of your life is in direct proportion to the quality of your questions.*”

This is the moment, right now, to take a deep and honest look into the current state of your life affairs. I am going to be asking you a lot of hard questions throughout this book. Take this precious moment in your life to not just browse through the questions but take a minute or two to answer them. I guarantee you it will be worth your while right now and it will spark something within you. Once your brain listens to or reads a question, it starts looking for the answer. It is a natural and immediate reaction, not even conscious from your part.

If you take it just one step further and answer the question mentally, then something better happens: you immediately start an automatic assessment of the very thing you just asked yourself

about and this ignites a feeling in you, one maybe of discomfort or lacking... that's great! That means you now have "a bug bite" that will start to itch, to bother you. Once you become conscious of something you do not like, it will never go away until you do something about it ... even if you ignore it for the time being. Now you "cannot not know;" there is no going back to living in bliss ignorance, my dear friend.

Now, if you write your answers down, *that is the beginning of magic!* You would then be creating, from non-physical (a thought) to physical (written) – you would have just put in motion the art of manifesting a concrete reality (a lot more on this later).

Maybe you really want a drastic change in your life, or maybe you feel like your life is "just okay" and time is running out. Maybe you have secured your financial stability, but you feel the time trade-off is just one you are no longer willing to pay. Could your relationships be paying the price for your financial success, or worse ... for your financial struggles? Could you be suffering from self-doubt and fear so profound that you feel paralyzed and stuck? Or what if maybe – I am going to dare betting here – the title of this book rang a bell and, if you have reached this far, could it be that you feel that the current culture in your own business is not one of growth, camaraderie, respect, commitment, and, most especially, fun and passion toward common results?

Could you be tired of hiring and firing people you feel are just ungrateful, unprofessional, or simply too inept to do the basic stuff they are paid to do? Yes, I know these are harsh words, but so many times this is what I've heard from my clients.

Just know that this doesn't have to be the rule, just because you hear from colleagues and close friends that are business owners the same situations. You can choose to create a different reality, it is not only about your business, it is about your daily life.

Step 1 Conclusion: Know Where You Really Are ***(and Dare to Dream Your Future)***

Time to start building your new future.

Grab paper and pen, set a timer for only fifteen minutes, and don't overthink these answers. It is better if you finish all of them and then go back to them once you finish reading the book. You will notice a much wider perspective when you review your answers.

Take an honest look and write where you are right now. Some guiding questions:

- *How do you feel on a regular basis? What are the most constant thoughts you have?*
- *How is your business doing financially? How many hours a day do you still need to work daily? Do you have a team you feel passionate to work with, and blessed to have them?*
- *How is your relationship with your loved ones? Partner? Children?*
- *How is your health and vitality? Do you exercise, eat well, sleep well, and have bounds of energy?*
- *When was the last time you took a fully disconnected vacation? How many can you afford to take a year without the business suffering?*
- *How much time do you give yourself for self-growth, to know yourself better in the pursuit of living fully in alignment with your passion and purpose in life? How much time do you take to consciously think about how happy you are right now and what do you need to do to be even happier?*

Now that you have an understanding of the power of contrast in your life and you clearly know what you *do not* want present any longer in your life or want to ever happen again, it is the time to write what you want, where are you going, what you dream about.

Here are some questions that may spark your imagination. Dare to dream, do not “be realistic,” just plainly write what you want from life. It is never big enough; it will be unreachable if you do not even dare to write it down. Go on. Just let your imagination fly and flood you with feelings of accomplishment, freedom, joy, and happiness!

- *How am I going to live the next ten years of my life? How am I going to live today so that I can create the tomorrow I am committed to?*
- *What am I going to stand for from now on? What will be the signature of my character in each decision I make for myself and for my team?*
- *Who do I need to become to get to the future I want? What little habits do I need to change every single day until I become that which I practice?*
- *How do I contribute to the people who surround me? How do I make a difference in their lives, that at the end of the day will make a difference in my life, in my fulfillment?*
- *Pretend it's ten years from now. Look back. What are you feeling, knowing you have accomplished your dreams beyond your wildest imagination?*

This book is designed to offer you all the strategies, tools, and golden nuggets that can help you create, live, and enjoy the life that you currently may only be dreaming of. But you need to be an active participant if you truly want to juice this book and make it a companion in your journey to success.

Chapter 5

Step 2 – The Power of Your Story

“You are the result of 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it.”

— Charles R. Swindoll

It had been twenty-six hours since it started.

The searing pain that she felt from her neck travelling down her spine and intensifying in her lower back and abdomen came in heated waves. The sheets were stained with blood and sweat, and the smell of blood was so strong she could almost taste it in her mouth.

Her hair was stuck to her face and neck; her tight ponytail had come loose at some point. In the middle of all that huffing, puffing, growling, and swearing – oh yeah, the swearing could give her a tiny distraction – were the incessant cramps that were almost unbearable as the electrifying waves of pain took her breath away every few minutes. She lost track of time; she only knew it was too long. Her throat was dry and coarse from the screaming. The only thing that made it bearable was that she knew the final moment was coming closer. She could feel it.

Then it happened.

A final push and she heard a loud and clear cry. She felt like it was the most beautiful sound she had ever heard in her life! And it was a girl! A healthy, beautiful, and vibrant little girl! Kissing her daughter on the forehead for the first time was the happiest moment in her life.

Reading the first part of the story, you thought someone was being tortured.

A woman was giving birth, and yes, she experienced raw and extreme physical pain, but giving birth to the light of her life, her daughter, made her focus on the marvel of welcoming a human being into her life, one who she would forever and unconditionally love.

The actual painful and long process of giving birth was quickly forgotten, a mere nuisance compared to the extreme joy and happiness she was now feeling while adoringly staring at her firstborn's eyes. Same experience, different meaning.

If any woman would choose to focus on the physical pain of giving birth, for sure she would never want to do it again. Maybe she would even blame the newborn child for being the cause of so much pain. That is what we do a lot of times – we go through a traumatic and painful

experience and we tend to blame the external cause of it: the boss who fired you, the husband who cheated on you, the abusive father, the low-life who stole money from you... and so on.

When, in fact, when you really take a look at it, everything, absolutely everything in life that happens to you, you decide what it means to you; you choose your story. *And this decision changes the whole course of your life and your future.*

I once heard about a story of a man – bitter and mean, a drug addict, an alcoholic, and a woman abuser – who was serving a life sentence for killing a police officer while he was being given a speeding ticket “just because he lost it” when the police officer berated him. He had two sons who he never cared about; he saw them during brief occasions between prison times. One of the sons grew up to be “just like Dad,” a vicious man who lived his life stealing and picking fights with everyone, and he too was in jail for beating his wife into a coma.

His brother, on the other hand, was the complete opposite. He was happily married with three healthy kids. He was an elementary school social studies teacher who volunteered for little league coaching on a regular basis. How can they be so different, growing up in the same household, the same neighborhood, and with the same abusive father? Both of them were asked privately: “*Why has your life turned out the way it has?*” To the amazement of the one conducting the surveys, the answer was exactly the same: “*With a father like that, what else would I have become?*”

It gives you a pause to think, yes?

Beliefs: The Immense Power of Something You Barely Think About

How many times do we describe our lives, our present situation and circumstances, based on a list of external events that have happened to us?

We believe that these events and people are the reason our life is shaped the way it is. We believe it to be the real truth: “*Of course, I had cancer and now I live in fear,*” “*Of course, my son died and the pain is still unbearable,*” “*Of course, I am bankrupt, I hate myself,*” “*Of course, I was fired and now I feel bitter, I worked there for fifteen years!*” “*Of course I am depressed, I had a nasty and painful divorce.*”

It is not the events of our lives that have made us into who we are today, but the meaning we choose to give them according to our beliefs. It is how we interpret what happens. That is why two individuals who live the exact same experience can actually derive a completely opposite life-

lesson from it, and they can be so different that one version of it uplifts them for life and the other can destroy them.

Beliefs are the most determinant factor, *the pivotal factor*, that determines if one's life is filled with happiness, joy, and purpose, or if it is filled with misery, despair, and emptiness. Beliefs are what separates a Mandela from a Hitler. Beliefs are what makes great men and women in history, while others just live a life of no significance for themselves or for others.

You are the result of all the most predominant stories you tell yourself and you tell others.

And you do it every day with little comments and little actions. You may not even be aware of them because they are *so ingrained in what you believe is the truth, that it becomes your gospel and you see it as unchangeable and irrefutable*. Especially if you have lived in that story for a decade or two; people rarely question their long-held beliefs, even if they do not serve them well at all!

The sad thing is that sometimes we use these events to explain our shortcomings, to justify the very thing that we don't like about our lives.

To think that your reality is what is "real," that it is unchangeable because you have tried so many times to change it, and to think that "it is just what it is" because it is what you can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch is the biggest illusion a person can have.

A Bit More About Beliefs – the Anatomy of a Belief

"We are what we think.

All that we are arises with our thoughts.

With our thoughts, we make our world."

— Buddha

The past few years, with the explosion of personal development programs and life and business coaching practices by renowned coaches such as Tony Robbins, Wayne Dyer, and T. Harv Eker among many others, there is this word, "*belief*," that comes up everywhere as the root of good or the root of evil. And... yes, I will say it too like they have done all the time: Your beliefs will be the key to your success or to your failure, *every single time*.

So, what is a belief?

A belief is not a thing; it is rather a *feeling of certainty* that you have about something.

And since you feel certain about it, it is what you most frequently say to yourself and to others about any topic. Putting it in simpler words: *a belief is a thought that you say over and over again until it becomes your truth.*

And when a particular belief becomes your truth, then it becomes your guidance to make decisions and take action. Beliefs are a guiding force in your life. They are the lenses through which you see the world, you see others, and you see life in general.

For example, if you believe you are an excellent project manager, what you are really saying is, *“I feel with complete certainty I can organize to a successful completion pretty much anything.”* And that belief then makes you act accordingly. To continue with this example, you then would become very resourceful and efficient when attacking any project. And you would feel so certain about this particular belief that you could even teach other people your best tips and hacks about project management; then as practice makes perfect and you will become the best project manager there is. But it all started with your own belief first.

The same happens the other way around. Watch what happens over time when you begin to think that you are not good at any particular subject – let’s say leadership. The more you think you are not good at leading a team, that you simply do not have the skills to get a group of people to follow your instructions not only willingly but joyfully, the more uncomfortable you will become over time when faced with situations, and the less you will practice leadership, the more you will avoid it or delegate it... and guess what? You become that which you practice, for better or for worse.

So, Let’s Talk About Your Business: Money and Employees

Let’s turn on the x-ray vision for a moment here.

Some time ago, you decided to be the owner of your own business and you had the courage to start one. You might be doing very well financially or maybe you have not “hit it big enough” yet.

If you are reading this book, it is for sure because you have employees, or you plan to have them in the near future. You want to make sure now that you can build a team of people who not only love what they do, but can help you accomplish your dreams: to have a successful company that grows every year because you have a team of people you enjoy working with, who love and

are fulfilled by what they do and, most importantly, who are inspired by a common purpose that fills everyone's hearts and fuels continuous actions to growth.

Earning a lot of money and having freedom of choice on how you spend your time are not the end results; they will happen as a natural effect of working in alignment with your passion and purpose. You will learn to clearly define what these are and will become a master on communicating this to your team in this book. So, I am just making sure we are on the same page as to what you want from your business. Let's now explore two sets of beliefs that are at the core of the success and growth of your business, or at the core of feeling "stuck" and working too much:

1. What are the main beliefs you have about money?
2. What are the core beliefs you have about your actual (or potential) employees?

And the reason why I am asking these two very important questions is because within the answers to these questions lie the reasons why you make the decisions you have made and why you get the results you are getting.

Before you tackle the answer to these two pivotal questions, let's review a bit more about your understanding of your *beliefs* and why they can be your best allies or your worst enemies.

The meaning we give everything, every single thing we label "good or bad," depends on the lenses we have on to view life. *We have discussed already how a belief is just a thought or an idea we keep repeating ourselves, or that we have heard many times, until it becomes our truth.* These beliefs we acquired through our experiences, mostly during our childhood, which is the time when we have no filter and our parents and teachers tell us what they think, they talk to us about their "opinion" about everything. These opinions become our truth, what governs our lives.

The first time I heard the idea that "*my beliefs are mostly other peoples' opinions,*" I was in shock, but it really helped me put *everything* into a new light. It helped me question everything that I knew was not serving me. For example, for many, many years, I thought that "I would rather die than fail". It sounds extreme, I know, but this is literally what I would tell myself. I was so proud of my "warrior attitude..." but now I know that my biggest failures lead to my biggest lessons in life.

I am who I am now as the result of all my failures and how *I faced them*. I am not the result of all my successes and how great I feel about them. *This was a huge change in my life.* It also allowed me to stop being my own worst critic, to instead recognize all my strengths first and

foremost and to see all my weakness in a more compassionate way, a work in progress, and to put a smile on my face whenever one of these non-helping thoughts came up. Oh yeah, they still do.

The only difference between me now and Lina twenty years ago is that I recognize them immediately and say to my own mind, “*Thanks for sharing.*” And I simply replace them with a more self-empowering thought that, repeated enough times, becomes a new belief. When I get impatient for anything, this is where I go mentally: “*I am where I am supposed to be now. All is well, it is part of my journey*” And I immediately feel a sense of relief. I trust that there is a bigger picture at work, one that I cannot see all the time, but that I feel when I quiet my world and when I am in gratitude for my present and in eager anticipation for what’s to come.

So, remember, our beliefs are the glasses through which we experience the world – mostly in autopilot, until we decide to pause and really take a look to see what part of that autopilot serves us well and what part does not.

It is our emotions that rule and determine the choices and decisions we make, and these choices lead to the quality of our lives and to our sense of purpose and fulfilment (or lack thereof). But first, how do these emotions manifest? What triggers them? How do they arise in you? Most of the time, they come as an immediate reaction – that means that you really did not make the decision to respond, your subconscious did, and this autopilot is shaped by your beliefs, which in turn are shaped by your experiences.

We’re not driven by reality but by our perception of reality.

Repeat your new beliefs that empower you and make you feel good, and repeat new habits that help you transform your emotional, spiritual, and physical body. See, it is both a mental exercise to change your new beliefs (the *muscle of happiness*, I call it) and it is a physical exercise when you decide to acquire new empowering habits that support your new beliefs –meditating, journaling, gratitude exercises, and yoga are among my favorites.

Here is a list of fifty of the most common beliefs that people have about money. Would like to know what you really think about money? Place a number from zero to ten next to each belief, ten being the number that expresses you are in agreement 100% with the phrase and one showing that you are in complete disagreement.

1. Money is the root of all evil.
2. It’s more enlightening to be poor than rich.

3. Most rich people probably did something bad or dishonest to get their money.
4. Having a lot of money will make me less spiritual or pure.
5. Getting rich takes too much work and struggle.
6. Having a lot of money is a big responsibility.
7. I don't feel "good enough" to be rich.
8. Realistically, chances are I'll never be rich.
9. Getting rich is a matter of luck or fate.
10. Getting rich isn't for people like me.
11. Striving for wealth won't allow much time for anything else in life.
12. To be rich, you have to use people and take advantage of them.
13. If I get rich, everyone will want something from me.
14. If I get rich, there are certain people in my life who won't like it or me.
15. If I have a lot of money, it means someone else is going to have less.
16. Having excess money means you're greedy.
17. I'm not very good in the area of money and finances.
18. If I get a lot of money, I might lose it.
19. If I really strive for wealth and don't succeed, I'll feel like a failure.
20. I have the potential for wealth; all I need is a break.
21. This just isn't the right time for me to start "going for it" financially.
22. I don't really want to be wealthy.
23. Money isn't really that important.
24. You can't strive for wealth and be happy and fulfilled at the same time.
25. Money can cause a lot of problems.
26. It's not right to make a lot more money than my parents.
27. You can't get rich doing exactly what you love.
28. Trying to earn money is a hassle and a struggle.
29. It takes money to make money.
30. People should only have as much money as they need live comfortably.
31. Striving for wealth can cause stress and health problems.
32. It's difficult to get rich these days.

33. Most of the good opportunities are gone.
34. Given my past, it would be difficult for me to get rich.
35. I'm not smart enough to get rich.
36. I'm not educated enough to get rich.
37. I'm too young to get rich.
38. I'm too old to get rich.
39. As a woman, it's much more difficult to get rich.
40. I don't like selling or promoting.
41. I wish I didn't have to deal with money.
42. I don't enjoy managing money.
43. I don't have time to manage money.
44. I don't need to manage my money because I hardly have any.
45. If you are rich in love, health, and happiness, you don't need money.
46. I can make it on my own. I don't need help from others.
47. If I ask for help, people will think I'm weak.
48. The only reason to work is to make money.
49. There's no use earning a lot more money because I'll just have to pay more taxes.
50. Once I have a lot of money, I'll finally feel secure.

Results: *All beliefs you rated above eight indicate that you have some beliefs about money that are not helping you at all. All beliefs you rated zero to three show you are in a very good place when it comes to thinking about money. Anything in between is a work in progress.*

Why is this important? Because most likely you are in business because you want to make lots of money, right? But then, what if your most intrinsic beliefs about money are working against you every day, and you are not even aware of it?

This is the equation for *making anything you desire to happen or manifest into a reality: Beliefs generate your thoughts, thoughts trigger feelings, feelings lead to actions, actions become your results.* Results are your life.

So, you see, your beliefs about money will directly impact your results.

It sorts of works like an internal thermostat. Let's say, like everyone else, you sometimes make money and sometimes you lose it. You will always go back to your own internal set point of the money you believe you can make, can have, or are worth. And this has everything to do with your most ingrained money beliefs. For example, if you believe, "*I always make money but somehow I always end up losing it again,*" guess what will happen every time you indeed make money?

Here is a list of some beliefs that you may have about finding, hiring, and keeping employees in your company. Would like to know what you really think about hiring employees? Place a number from zero to ten next to each belief, ten being the number that expresses you are in agreement with 100% and one showing that you are in complete disagreement.

1. Finding, hiring, and keeping highly skilled employees is nearly impossible.
2. Most employees do not care about the business; they only care about their next paycheck.
3. Most employees will leave if offered more money somewhere else.
4. Nobody can do what I do in my business.
5. I need to supervise everyone constantly for things to work well.
6. I believe in this phrase: "It is only business, nothing personal."
7. Employees are never fully satisfied, not matter what I do.
8. You cannot fully trust anyone.
9. It is very difficult to keep employees motivated.
10. I don't have enough money to pay highly skilled employees.

Results: *All beliefs you rated above eight indicate that you have some beliefs about employees that are not helping you at all. All beliefs you rated zero to three show you are in a very good place when it comes to thinking about employees. Anything in between is a work in progress.*

Okay, I Get It. Now How Does This Apply to Me and My Business?

As I mentioned before, I got fired.

And it was the best thing that could have happened to me.

But back then, it was the worst moment in my life. It shook me to the core of my being and the feelings of failure, self-doubt, anger, and even embarrassment felt very real and raw to me.

I would always give a general explanation when asked what happened. “*We did not get along. It ran both ways and no business can be managed like that. I understand the decision made. I don’t like it, but I get it.*” It was the polite and mature thing to say.

But inside, another story was boiling, one that evolved from bitterness, anger, feeling like the victim at the beginning. But at some point, this led to another story, one that was very strong and it gave rise to a new belief in my life: “*I will never treat anyone the way I was treated. I want to work in a place that makes me feel safe, happy, productive, and valued as an individual.*”

And that right there was my belief foundation for what would later become *Delivering Happiness at Familia Alo*: our business culture, the key to our financial success, sustainability, extraordinary teamwork, and, most importantly, source of happiness, wellbeing, and fulfillment for us and for our team.

And that is the *power of your story*.

Conclusion Step 2: The Power of Your Story

In this chapter, we learned that it is not what happens to us that determines our character and therefore our lives. It is how we interpret those events, it is about the meaning we give it.

Take stock of your life right now:

- *What are the events in your life you feel have left a mark in you?*
- *Is this mark on your life one that helped you grow as a person and one that you wear as a badge of honor, or is this mark more like a scar that has not completely healed and is still present in your life?*
- *If you had the power to delete this event that marked your life in a significant way, would you? If you would, it could be an indication that you have not processed the suffering into pain, one that could actually transform your whole life. “Pain is inevitable in life; suffering is optional.” The secret: How you view it and interpret it, no matter how terrible the pain, is entirely up to you. Only you can make this life-transforming decision. No amount of counseling or prescription drugs can fully alleviate the pain.*

- Let's focus on your business for a minute. *What is the most difficult situation you have lived so far?* Could you ask the question, *What did it happen for?* or *What did you learn from it?* How can changing the meaning you have attached to that story actually prepare you for a bigger and brighter future?

Chapter 6

Step 3 – When Profits Meet Passion and Purpose

“There is no worse failure than success without fulfillment.”

—Tony Robbins

Those who build extraordinary companies understand that the primary choke on growth for any great company is not the technology, or market, or product, or competition. It is one thing above all others: the ability to find, hire, and keep the dream team players.

And what is behind accomplishing this? You are. As the leader of the pack, you are.

And your number one tool to be able to do this is creating a vision and a culture that reflects who you are, what you stand for, what you believe in: your purpose.

Dream team players will come on board to help you if you are able to inspire them with your vision – the reason why your business exists. Through that vision, they feel they will grow personally, professionally, and financially.

Okay, you just read that and may be saying to yourself, *“But I don’t have an idea of what my purpose or my vision is. How can I pass it on to everyone if I myself do not know? I just know I want my business to grow to make a lot of money.”* Is this you? Do not worry, we will get there.

In this chapter, I want to take you through our story and how we got to know what our purpose is. You will feel identified with many aspects of it; after all, you own a business too. But what I want you to pay special attention to is that the story is a regular story, with events that have highs and lows. What is very important is that you see amidst all those events a set of personal principles and values that started making themselves visible to us.

If you have a new business, great! After you do the work, you will start from the beginning with your clear vision/purpose and a set of values that will help you make decisions easier and more consistent. The same goes for your team.

If you have been in business for more than five years, that’s great too! That means you made a lot of decisions that took you where you are, and in this chapter, you can start taking stock of what was behind those decisions. You will see the patterns, and through these patterns you will be able to identify the reasons behind your decisions: your values and principles, even if they are not fully put into words in your mind. These values – when clearly identified, written down, and

communicated to your team – will help everyone understand what you stand for and what the company stands for, and it will give everyone a framework on how things are done. The “what” will change over time – it includes your products or services, and it is in constant change following the changes in the market and the needs of your clients. The “why” is consistent once it is clear.

As the leader, you need to know very clearly *why* you do *what* you do. If you do not know why you do what you do, if you can’t clearly articulate and communicate why your business matters beyond its products and services, how will the rest of your team know? And if they don’t know your why, why will they come to work in the first place? Just for a salary? How long is that sustainable?

To inspire your team and future players of your team, you need to know your why with 100% clarity. *Clarity is power* – never more important than the role it plays in having your team players follow you. As the saying goes, “*The only requirement a leader has to have is followers.*” To lead requires those who are willing to follow. And people follow those who believe in something bigger than themselves, a product, or a service.

What do you believe in at the very core of your being? What do you stand for since you can remember? What is important and non-negotiable to you?

Seventeen Years and Counting

It has been seventeen years since our company, Alo Global Technologies, was born. To be exact, the company was established on a very hot day in June 2002 in Florida.

Seventeen years in business is for sure something we feel very proud about. We are still here, strong and reinventing ourselves all the time. We’ve had our share of winnings and losings for sure, but the balance of it all is something that I am not only proud of as a business owner, but I am also immensely grateful for. This great company has given me and my family a quality of life I highly value and cherish, both in financial and personal fulfillment terms.

Most of the lessons and personal growth in my life I owe to this company and to the individuals who chose to share their path with us at some point.

It is the company that became the vehicle to express myself, to test myself, and to grow, to contribute to others and to give me freedom of choice. I would not be writing this book, sharing these experiences and some life and business lessons, if we did not go through so much since we

began. To repeat this very popular statistic, *“80% of new businesses close before the fifth year and only 4% will remain in their tenth year.”*

We beat the odds, for sure – seventeen years and we are still here.

I cannot honestly say it feels like yesterday or that time really flew by, because as I look back, I see in my mind like a movie reel all the great accomplishments, the very costly mistakes, the road that was not always paved, and the raw disappointments and extraordinary joys we’ve shared as a team. Mostly, I remember right now all the individuals who were with us and are not anymore, those who left their DNA here, and even those that I’d rather forget now. They all played a role in the big picture.

A wave of nostalgia washes over me and, at the same time, an incredible feeling of fulfillment fills my heart, as I know that for many of our employees, if not most of them, this company, the team, the experiences, and David and I left an indelible mark in their lives. I know their lives are better by this experience, and that fills my heart and my soul with joy, appreciation, and gratitude. I know we have done good, and I know it because my life too is better tenfold.

Add a Desk and a Chair to the Guest Room

It is not quite literal that we started in a garage, because we lived in an apartment building that had no private garage. But our first company’s office was “open” the moment we said, “Let’s just buy a desk and a chair and put it in the guest room” of our two room apartment in North Miami, Florida.

It was a very small beginning.

Our current B2B telecommunications and technology company, Alo Global Technologies, which today sells to top enterprise companies in our market, started by selling pre-paid calling cards.

That product was at the very bottom of all telco services back then, and when I say “very bottom,” I mean it was the simplest product available to make long distance phone calls. Get a disposable pre-paid calling card, scratch the strip pad, and use the pin number to make a call. To most people like us from other countries who were living in Miami, it was the cheapest way to call our loved ones.

It was at the bottom of the industry for another reason, too: all the companies, without exception, made fraudulent and false charges to the cardholders to diminish the balance available

to make calls and pocket it (aka: stealing). It was a dirty industry, and everyone knew it: the sellers and the buyers. But it was an industry that moved millions of dollars, and a lot of people made a lot of money very quickly. Just like the real estate bubble crash, everyone who was stealing from their clients with “hidden fees” justified their wrongdoings by saying, *“Everyone else is doing it, they are getting filthy rich; I will not be the only stupid one to miss out.”* And on it went.

So, when we decided to go and serve that market, but we did it with two very innovative and sure-to-catch-attention changes and a basic promise to our clients: We offered the huge convenience of card recharging by phone or internet (This was new then! No one had it, so we were pioneers here), and we made our product without any weird round-offs or fraudulent service fees. In short, we promised we would not steal their minutes from them.

And boy, did it pay off! Slowly but surely, we began growing, not very fast because we did not have a marketing budget. Word of mouth was our sole marketing tool.

As I look back now, I can see how our own values and principles (not very well laid out then, but intrinsically part of us and therefore our company) played a very important role in the decisions we made back then that brought us to the place we are now.

I love the saying, *“How you do anything is how you do everything.”* The idea to clearly communicate to our market, that our product was without any hidden charges was one that won trust from our clients over time and made a determinant economic difference for us.

So, honesty and saying things as they are, are personal values we brought to our company that permeated everything we did from that moment on.

You may think, “Yeah, it is obvious to say you are honest,” but the huge difference is that while our competitors were offering, say, 250 minutes for a ten-dollar prepaid card, we would tell them the truth: it was only 100 minutes. How many people do you think would still prefer to hear that they would get 250 minutes, when in fact they got only 80 from our competition? Incredibly, a lot of them! It took guts from us to believe that people would sooner or later fully realize the difference, and choose us over an empty promise. They did, but it took time.

This is a very specific example from our industry, but one that helps me illustrate to you that before your services or products, what is most important are your values and principles to make strategic business decision that will make your business prevail over time, even if at the beginning they feel difficult to make, even market counterintuitive.

And as we like to say in simple terms, “I make decisions that allow me to sleep well at night and allow me to look at myself in the mirror the following morning.” Later, something like ten years later, we would use these instances to help us give form to our written company values.

How Many of Your Clients Do You Know by Their First Name?

Since this was a two-people show at the beginning, we were able to interact very closely with each of our customers. We got to know each one of them, many on a first name basis. We got to know what brought them to this country, what they loved, what they hated about the competition, and what they raved about our products and particularly about our customer service (that was David and me, of course)!

This extremely-small-business time gave us a wealth of up-close knowledge. I don’t think any paid market study would have given us more insights than us answering the calls and emails of a few hundred people every week. We were there, and we were paying attention.

When you hear the phrase, “Listen to your customer,” really do. No matter the size of your business, make it a point to speak with your customers, go on sales presentations to new clients, and go or talk to a client that is really pissed off about things that went wrong with the product or service you provide. I often heard David telling our clients and our team, “We cannot promise you that everything will be 100% fine all the time. But we can promise you we will show up 100% if something goes off. That I guarantee as head of the company.”

And we deliver our promise 100% of the time.

Hiring Overseas for the First Time

We steadily grew over the first few months and very quickly we needed help for the day-to-day operation. We could not continue answering the phone at one in the morning for a client living in Florida whose boyfriend was in Colombia or anywhere else in Latin America, who at that time would not drive to the closest gas station to buy a calling card. She would instead call us (no matter the time of the day), because, after all, that is why our product was the best and people raved about it and told all their friends about it. So, we got those calls at ungodly hours of the night ... and yes, we always answered, even if it was to recharge only ten dollars.

One night, at about 2:00 a.m. after David hung up the phone, groggy and pretending his voice was not hoarse from sleep while talking to our client, he turned to me (and of course I was already awake from listening to his conversation with a client who for sure knew he was the owner/CEO/customer service/support guy rolled into one), and then he just said to me, “We need to do something about this,” and went back to sleep.

And we sure did.

Necessity is a particular animal. When you are dealing with it, it can be a real pain in the butt or it can make you extremely creative. Your choice.

In our case, creativity poured out. We did not have the income to be able to have full-time employees on payroll in the United States. We only had enough to pay basic variable service costs, a few fixed operational costs, and both our salaries.

So, we turned our eyes to our wonderful developing country, Colombia, and its amazing service-oriented people and we thought we would give it a try – of course, who wouldn’t? With wages at least one third of those in the USA, and us owning a Telco company that obviously facilitated our communications, it was the next step to take, right?

We would hire people in Colombia to answer all our customer service and support demands. It sounds pretty simple now, but for us back then, it was a bit of a challenge. At the time we were waiting for our green cards and we could not leave the country. We were of the old school idea that hiring and training people had to be done personally, one-on-one, face to face. How else would they really “*feel*” how important their job was for us and for our company?

We felt back then that we were handing our beloved clients to some individuals we did not know personally, could not train personally, and would not even be able to supervise personally to check if they were really working, taking a nap, or snacking every twenty minutes from their own fridge. Because, to compound everything, we were not only deciding to hire our first employees 1,500 miles away from us, but we were hiring them to work from home!

So, this is how our first trial at HomeOffice (this is the term we internally use to call our working from home business model) was born, and I can advance to you now, our lives have never been the same.

It was one of the best decisions we ever made in our business.

First of Many to Come

So, we hired our first few employees based in Colombia to provide for all our basic customer service and support all of our clients who were mostly based in Florida and New York.

The very funny thing is that in my previous job as the director of customer service and operations of one of the main telco companies in Colombia, Orbitel S.A., the main project I had to develop from zero to full completion was the set-up of all the call centers of the company. Back when the company was launched new in the market, the idea was to compete against the company that was the monopoly of the market. And Orbitel's strategic marketing decision was to really make a blinding difference to the public. The main weapon to compete with was customer service. The competitor's customer services really, really sucked since forever, and everyone in the market felt that way.

So, millions of dollars were spent in advertising to shout to the world that we were the new kids on the block with the basic message: "We come to take care of you, and we know you have been neglected for so many years." All eyes were placed on everything that had to do with customer service and support and being the director of that division gave me a fantastic playground. A lot of experience and a deep knowledge of customer relationship management as a business backbone philosophy.

All inbound and outbound call centers, from customer service to sales and technical support to the long-distance operators (back then, when they still existed), were my responsibility, having five fully functional different call centers with around 1,400 agents.

And the great part: Money was not spared, so we got to do, purchase, and hire the best of the best. Orbitel was on a mission, and I felt right where all the action was taking place. It was a fantastic time in my life! And again, it gave me the foundation of what David and I would build later in our business.

I experienced first-hand and in big leagues the importance of developing something based on your *client's real needs* and not just developing products and services because you think they are awesome. It sounds really simplistic, but among the top five reasons small business do not grow is because they base everything on product features that the business owner gets enamored with – this is a very expensive mistake, one that I can personally attest to.

A customer-centric company is one that will stand out for sure.

But to develop a great company that *will pass the test of time*, to really get *there*, not only because your bank account says so, but because your clients keep doing business with you and are more than happy to refer you to others, really takes more than outstanding products or services, systems, and processes that are customer-centric.

It takes a clear and inspiring business culture, a common purpose shared by everyone, and especially felt and breathed by you every day.

It cannot be faked. It cannot be a fad that sounds nice to you and makes you think that if it worked somewhere else, it will work in your company. Why? *Because your company is an extension of who you are* as the founder; it has your DNA, so to speak. Whether you do it explicitly or not, the company starts developing its own “personality.”

The employees gage from you how things are done, the level of standards that you hold yourself and others accountable to. Even if it is not written or verbally expressed, a culture starts developing from the very beginning in the little things, the big things, how you close a deal, how you treat the person who cleans the office, how you react to the bad news, how you keep your commitments, and even how punctual you are to start your meetings.

Your business culture will make or break your business sooner or later.

Hiring Out of the Box

The main issue we had as small business owners was the financial and business risk we felt we were taking by not doing recruiting, hiring, and training the usual way, following the known golden rule: *You only outsource what is not at the heart of your core business.*

And even though we were hiring the employees and not technically outsourcing, having them 1500 miles away and under a HomeOffice model filled us with anxiety and doubts.

Customer service was the heart of our business.

Yes, we sold telecommunications services, but that came second to us. *We were in the business of helping our customers keep close to their loved ones miles away.* We felt we were doing everyone a huge service by providing an honest and reliable service, and our close customer service was the signature of our business and what made us very different from our competitors.

Nevertheless, we took the risk and went ahead to hire our first few overseas HomeOffice employees – and it went amazingly well! We learned as we went. We knew from the beginning

that it was key that our people feel close to us, as if they were in a cubicle next to us. And most important back then, *we decided to trust them even before they earned it.*

What I mean by this is that usually the first issue that business owners face when hiring overseas or anyone working from home is, “Will they actually do what I am paying them to do?”

To solve this, they come up with ways to have them “check in and check out,” to make sure they work the numbers of hours they are being paid for. It is also very typical is to have a long list of KPI (Key Performance Indicators) to help keep track of all their activities.

For us, it was different.

We told them explicitly what we were expecting in terms of results, not in terms of activities. It did not mean we did not measure them, but our focus was not on the KPIs of the operation but on what was important to our clients, what we knew for a fact was important: to feel there was a person who cared on the other line and who would always go the extra mile if ever there was a problem.

Having your product or service working well, being reliable, and of a competitive price only buys you the ticket to play in the game, not to win.

Expanding Out of the Box

Our first four or five years were uneventful. We were growing slowly but surely, no big risks, no big gains. We chose to reinvest our profits – we chose the very conservative approach of not taking working capital loans or not selling a part of the business for working capital.

One day we realized that it was the same amount of effort to sell to individual people as it was to sell our services to small companies. And a new company was born right there, one targeting businesses.

We started our trials and did very well in the market of South Florida, again slowly but surely. And so, we decided to try Colombia’s market, but this time with a twist: How about if we just sell our services to the big corporations? We thought we were ready. We had the experience in a small scale, so how different could it be?

“Action trumps knowledge every day of the week,” Tony Robbins likes to say. In this case, it worked wonders – we just went head on.

I remember the day David pulled out a Portfolio magazine (one very popular business magazine in Colombia) with a published list of the top 100 companies in Colombia. And he just

said: *“Okay, I’ve got the list, I know where to call now, let’s do it.”* And he did! He sat down and cold-called each company, from the top down. To our amazement, at least 80% agreed to give him an appointment. He got the appointments, made a very simple PowerPoint presentation, put on a suit (which he did not ever use in Florida), and flew to Bogota, Medellin, and Cali to get our first enterprise-sized customers.

We had an amazing product, which was VoIP long distance services at a fraction of the cost in the market of Colombia with Tier 1 world carriers, meaning the Rolls-Royce in quality and reliability. The service was not 100% stable yet in Colombia, because of the bandwidth of internet back then, but our prospective clients chose “to try,” because if it worked for them, it meant lowering their telecommunications costs to about 80%. And boy, did it work!

That is how we started our Business to Business (B2B) division.

Once we got the first few of the “big ones” in the market, that gave us instant credibility to the eyes of everyone else. *“How else would we have become their vendor if we were not as great as we claimed we were?”* And so, we started knocking on many more doors with a lot more confidence.

There was a catch, though.

Soon enough, these prospective enterprise companies, which only contracted with the largest Telco providers in the country, started saying to us: *“We like your product very much, but we only contract with companies that have offices, at least in the top five cities in Colombia. We do not want to deal with different vendors.”*

And we did not have a single office in Colombia. Freak!

Creativity kicked in again.

We thought, “They said offices, they did not say brick-and-mortar offices...” We could hire a team comprised of a sales director with his tech guy in each city, and that would be doable, no? Because renting and operating five offices, all at the same time, would be totally out of our reach, again due to financial limitations.

So, again, necessity was at the source of our ideas, and the question was, *How do we do this out of the box?*

That is the magic of asking yourself the right questions.

The second you ask yourself a question with a powerful intention, everything around you starts confabulating to get to the answer. *“The quality of your life is in direct proportion to the quality of your questions”* is one of my favorite quotes that I keep present at all times.

In the course of six months, we found, hired, and trained our enterprise sales team in the five main cities in Colombia.

Once again, we were not able to do it in person, so we did everything remotely.

One key decision we made and took the financial risk of was to hire an A-player as our sales vice president based in Colombia. We went and looked for someone who *“had been there and had done that”*. We realized that you can only grow to the extent that you can surround yourself with people better than you at specific roles. And *sales is the area that spearheads a company*. Without sales, there is nothing, no matter if you have the greatest product or the greatest marketing strategies. In a B2B model, the VP of sales is our number two guy after the CEO.

There is this concept I have heard many times from great coaches, and we try our best to keep in mind most of the time: *“As the business owner, you need to be spending 80% of your time in sales-related activities if you want your company to grow.”* That means you have to have good individuals to help you do all that needs to be taken care of for a company to run smoothly. If you are doing the nitty gritty and micromanaging, you will be busy for sure, but growing to the next level? Hardly.

Again, the key is to find individuals who are not with you only because of salary, or benefits, or, worst of all, out of convenience – *“for-the-mean-time-until-I get something better”* kind of reasons.

The people who will help you build and grow your company come on board because they believe in your vision, in your dream, and particularly in the way you do things.

Paving the Way

All of these events in the first years of our company paved the way to build a strong belief in us, and that was to look at all possibilities in non-conventional ways.

Of course, there was a lot of trial and error, but that is part of our personalities. Both David and I would rather make a ton of mistakes and correct along the way than sit and analyze the hundred possibilities of what could go right or what could go wrong in any decision we make.

Because, after all, being a business owner means you are constantly making decisions.

In our non-conventional way of making decisions, we reached a point in our company – the mature seven-year mark – that made us ask ourselves, *Is this it? Is this all there is to it?*

Don't get me wrong. Of course, there was a ton still to grow.

We were still a small company, doing well year after year, bit by bit. We had our zealously sought-after peace of mind: We owned our home, had a few investment properties, we had no debts at all, we were saving money for retirement, and we just started our family and had two small children. We were working from home, which was amazing, and took three weeks of nice vacations every year. So, it was nice.

But nice was not good enough anymore.

You Get What You Ask For – In the Most Unexpected Ways

Sometimes, you are brave enough to make decisions to change to something better, even if it means walking into the unknown.

Other times, circumstances force you to make the decisions.

Either way, it is always for your own good, even if at the time it feels really uncomfortable and every cell of your body is crying the victim cry – *“I did not deserve this!”* I look back and I think that is exactly what happened in our case. There is a saying which I love to keep in mind at all times, that goes, *“Things do not happen to you, they happen for you.”*

As I was saying, we were in business for seven years and we were content. Life was good – not great, good; no complaints, always grateful... but... *why not have a great and extraordinary life, one where you get to choose how you want to spend your time?* Why settle for less only because all your basic needs and some more are covered? Comfort zone can be a real deterrent to live to your full potential, there is no “real hunger” that pushes you, until something happens that shakes your life.

We made the decision to buy real estate as our way to diversify, invest our profits, and build a security net at the same time that we were developing our business. We were big fans of Robert Kiyosaki -author of best-selling book *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* - and were inspired by all his real estate books and watching how a friend of ours bought twenty houses in three years with no real money down or great expertise, just following his books' advises. We saw it was possible.

Our plan was a very simple one: We would have thirty rental properties in the next ten years. We would be conservative and buy only three every year. With this, we were aiming to

create passive income sometime in the future. What could be safer and more stable than real estate investing, right?

Great idea. Bad timing.

2008, the United States real estate bubble crisis.

For seven years, we worked hard and focused on our Telco company. We made progress and we were diligently investing most of our profits and savings in real estate. We bought four houses in the first two years. We were right on schedule according to the plan. Then, prices started plummeting almost overnight. We were hit by Hurricane Wilma and the building where we had two properties suffered massive structural damage. Big assessments with the force of a hurricane hit us afterwards. It began to choke us.

We made the decision to hold on – a costly decision. For about three years, we lost money from our properties every single month, and stubbornly we held on, waiting for something to change in the market, but it did not.

In 2009/2010, we decided to let go of all the properties –including our home- and concentrate on our business, which was growing. But the turmoil we had felt with the constant bleeding from our properties for sure played a role in decisions to hold on investing any additional capital that would have allowed us to strengthen our team, our backbone systems, or even to have more budget for marketing.

It was a painful and gut-retching moment in our lives.

Making the decision to let go was hard. To realize that we lost all the money we made in the past ten years of our productive lives was a low blow. But at the same time, there was a big relief. A decision was made! We short-sold our properties, including our home, and after the cry and mourning period, it was time to move on.

When you make a decision that finally gives you a direction, something amazing happens.

Things start to line up for you. Coincidences happen, people who you have not heard from in eons show up, and opportunities knock on your door. There is such a sense of relief when you make an important decision that you know in your heart you were postponing.

When you are frozen in fear, you lose clarity, you lose your motivation, you see everything in gray, and you are totally oblivious to the good things that may be happening around you.

“Energy flows where attention goes.” Never a more truthful statement in our lives.

The Turning Point

Having nothing to lose gives you courage.

The truth is, having nothing to lose is the greatest, most magical thing that can ever happen to you. *Only when you have lost everything will you have the courage to risk everything.*

We realize there is no wrong step that could be more wrong than what already happened. *All of a sudden, every step becomes right.* The way we make decisions, our choices are no longer overanalyzed. It becomes like an instinct to act toward what feels good from the core of our beings, and we find ourselves not so heavily attached to the outcomes. When you lose something valuable to you, all you want is to feel better from a deeper part of your being. *And then you open yourself to possibilities, different than the ones you lived so far.*

And this is when we gain. This is when the lessons from our loss emerge from our hearts into our new actions that lead into new lives. We gain happiness, strength, and power.

We become the sole creators of our destiny.

Right after we lost all our investments in 2010, a book called the *The Passion Test* by Janet Atwood landed on my lap by a long series of “coincidences.” That book led me to another one: *The Secrets of the Millionaire Mind* by T. Harv Eker.

Two months later, we ended up going to a three-day free seminar offered by his company. Just that seminar was life-changing by itself – I learned so much in those three days. It was just perfect for the situation we were going through at the time.

I particularly learned how our ingrained beliefs and daily thoughts play the most determinant role in the creation of our lives and how each of us has a certain “thermostat” of results limited or maximized by our beliefs. If we learn how to dial up that “thermostat,” we learn how to succeed in anything we set our minds to, as a belief is nothing more than the most recurring thoughts we tell ourselves.

At the end of the “free” seminar, of course, there was an offering: a \$20,000 package for two that included about twelve different seminars, most on the West Coast. At the time, we lived in Florida!

Really?!?!

We just lost everything, true, *but this was clearly a turning point for us.* And both David and I recognized it as such.

We both had the deep realization that everything we had done, we had done using all our best capabilities as individuals and professionals. Our business was a reflection of who we were in terms of our personal and professional growth. We knew that we needed to bring ourselves to another, much higher level first, and then our company's results would follow.

We saw this package of courses as the way to up our game; we both recognized that.

But the big and glaring "but" was how we could pay \$20,000 when our bank accounts just had enough for our day-to-day. We had a small business going and two small children at home. Tamara was four years old at the time and Daniel was two years old. Not just that, but how would both of us travel to the West Coast every three to four months as the seminar schedule proposed? Who would take care of our children in our absence? We had no family close by. And everything required money that we did not have.

This is why I say that when you lose everything, you become more courageous.

We took the plunge. We jumped forward. *We trusted that we would make it work and that this was happening because we needed to pause, re-evaluate our lives, and make decisions different than those made before.* We needed new tools in our toolbox for sure.

And we did. As Einstein once said, *"It is madness to continue doing the same over and over again and expect different results."*

We found the way to finance the course, the plane tickets, the hotel and meals, the car rental, and even the tickets to bring family from Colombia to take care of our children every time we traveled.

And it was not difficult nor titanic work. I believe that our strong desire led for the right circumstances to show up. We were even able to get \$2,000 of American Airlines travel vouchers for free – talk about manifesting a way in the most unexpected ways!

I am one who truly believes in Jim Rohn's famous phrase, *"Success leaves clues,"* because we lived it. We shortened our learning curve by going to seminars, camps, reading books, and particularly having one-on-one coaches who we could directly interact with. They all did what I wanted to do, so it was a matter of doing in a consistent way what they did. And it worked!

In the next two years, after we began our journey of self-growth, which lead to professional growth, our company took an exponential jump in sales of 700%.

It was during this time that we first came across with another book that would change our company from that moment on: *Delivering Happiness* by Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos, a billion-

dollar company that sells shoes and apparel online and was bought by Amazon some years ago for 1.2 billion dollars. Their astonishing and rapid success was based on how they did things, *and how you do things is always connected to people*. They created a business culture based on happiness – employee happiness – where the core philosophy revolved around the concept of “take care of your employees first; they will take care of your customers.”

For the first seven years of our business, we were doing some things very much related to this idea, but it was not something that we gave a name or a business form under a set of strategies until we saw it in this book as a real success case. Then, we decided to follow the steps of a proven successful strategy, one that was aligned 100% with our core values as individuals.

When we lost all our investment and we felt we lost everything we worked on for ten years, I remember vividly talking to David and asking ourselves, “*What do we really want? From life, that is?*” And the deeper we went, the more “whys” we added to each answer, the more we always came back to the same: *I want to be happy*. We both wanted the same.

And that meant we needed to change how we did things in our business and the choices we made during our working hours of the day, which made up the majority of our waking hours – in short, our lives. We realized that we both wanted to make a lot of money from our business and find happiness while making it there. *And we did not have to choose between the two*.

This was truly when we realized that *profits, passion, and purpose* could perfectly align as we introduced *Delivering Happiness at Familia Alo* as our business culture. *And then, profits became a by-product of our passion and our purpose, not the sole goal of our business*. Life was never the same again.

Over the course of seventeen years, we’ve had the privilege to have wonderful people working with us from different backgrounds, cultures, and countries.

We have seen individuals blossom in our company, coming from being new grads to highly skilled professionals, becoming leaders of their groups. We have seen individuals having incurable diseases coming back to full health – once again, if you feel good and have positive thoughts on a daily basis, your body will follow, and our business environment is conducive of that.

Your body tells you what your mind tries to quiet. We’ve had many people have “first times” in their lives and tell us they will never forget it and how these have challenged their current beliefs, particularly during our yearly retreats, where we spent three full days having fun and growing as a team.

The purpose of our company is for each individual to grow personally, professionally, and financially while we all enjoy what we do every day to provide extraordinary services to our clients.

This purpose fuels our actions every day. It is a never-ending fire, since it is not a purpose that can be fully attained in time. Why? Because there will always be room for more of everything we wish to have, to do, and to become. *This is when we fully understand that progress truly equals happiness.*

You know what is the best mental, emotional, and spiritual state you can be in every day in your business? *One where you are truly happy where you are now and fully excited with anticipation of what is to come.* Gratitude is the most powerful creative force there is, and if you combine it with a clear vision and purpose that keeps your fire on, because it means something important to you, you will be unstoppable.

We've had our share of ups and downs in our company over the years. We've made costly mistakes with our products, services, clients, systems, processes... you name it! But what has remained a constant has been our business culture of *Delivering Happiness at Familia Alo.*

This is the one single reason we are able to get back on our feet every time we face a challenge. We know we are together. David and I never feel alone against everything; we are part of an amazing group of individuals who make things happen. And you know the best part? Celebration time is fantastic when it is done with people you admire and love.

Did I say love? Yes, of course. Dare to love your employees. You will be amazed at what you will get in return!

Sure, it is a business, but as our company slogan says, make it "a business with soul."

Step 3 Conclusion: When Profits Meet Passion and Purpose

"Action trumps knowledge any time," says Tony Robbins.

But do you know what you actually need to be able to take continuous, consistent, and determined actions over time? Passion.

And do you know what is the only thing that fuels passion over time? Purpose.

And do you know why a lot of people feel restless and anxious without apparent cause and why depression is so rampant now a days? Because there is no purpose in their lives.

That is why a company with a clear purpose is like a magnet, because people want a purpose in life even if they do not articulate it quite like that. And everyone wants to belong to a common cause, especially if it is one aligned with their most intimate desires and dreams.

If you want to have a company that is a magnet to your ideal A employees, it is now the time to take stock of how you are doing today in your company:

1. *Do you know why you got into your business the first time?*
2. *Why are you in it now?*
3. *What do you need to get from this business in the long term? Hint: It has to do with more than just making money. Making money is just a byproduct.*

In the answer to these three questions, you will find the purpose of your business, which you will find out it is intrinsically connected to the purpose of your life, and if it is not, then make it so

Your business carries your DNA, and to keep it alive and thriving *over time*, you need to fuel your actions with passion.

Find and articulate your purpose and you will find inexhaustible fuel to turn your dreams into a reality... and you will attract the employees who are *intrinsically motivated because they believe in and share your purpose*. Get paper and a pen and answer these questions. There will be no better time than now.

Chapter 7

Step 4 –Finding and Hiring Extraordinary Individuals to Create Your All-Star Team

*“Clients do not come first. Employees come first.
If you take care of your employees, they will take care of your clients.”*
—Richard Branson

Do you by chance think that if you pay them, they will always deliver? And if you pay them more, then they will deliver more? Your employees, that is. I used to think that, especially because I used to be in those shoes.

I had a meteor-ascending career at all the jobs I had in my first ten years in the corporate world. I used to think that having a great salary and benefits, much higher than the average person of my age and experience, would make me happy and motivated to do my job. And for a long time, it did, or at least I thought that was the reason behind my never-ending quest to do and be the best I could be.

But then I look back now, and I realize that my motivation was really one very intrinsic to me, which was to excel, to be recognized as a high performer by my superiors and peers, and to feel the adrenaline rush of accomplishing a result – that was amazing! So, every time I changed jobs, I got a very nice raise, and I got nice raises every year as well. I associated performance and motivation with the salary I was being paid, and it worked wonders while the environment at the office was one of trust and safety.

Until that changed.

When I was transferred from Colombia to Florida to open and run a new office, there was a radical change in that work environment. I changed divisions, and together with that came a new boss. We never got along. But that was not the problem. I believe you can work with people you don't get along with as long as there is mutual respect and trust. He never earned mine, and when you work for someone you can't trust and feel safe with, communications become extremely difficult. And when communications break, everything else breaks – it is like a domino effect. The bad thing is that it is not as fast as the dominos piling down... it is a slow and painful death.

The thing is, you would think that because I was paid very nicely (nicely enough to leave my life and country behind and to uproot my husband as well), anything that I did not like or agree

with in my day-to-day would not be such a big deal. Wouldn't great money be enough to soothe a few pains? Why then was I feeling so miserable if I was being paid so handsomely to do my job, the job that I did so excessively well and happily over the past years?

I mean, I always excelled, even at very tough times and under a lot of pressure... what was different here? Why the utter feelings of impotence, frustration, fear, loneliness, and the silent tension that little by little eroded even my super high self-confidence? How does a peak performer turn into someone who hates her job, dreads the weekly follow-up meetings, stops sleeping, stops eating, and is at the verge of an emotional breakdown? How does that happen? I'll tell you how.

The main reason was emptiness.

No purpose, no cause "to fight for," no vision, no reason why I should go through all that other than "making the numbers of the business plan." I was just viewed as a mere tool to achieve that objective. Nothing else mattered then.

Back in Colombia, I was working for the same company under a very different leader who had a very clear vision, one with heart and soul: We were going to make a difference, to disrupt a whole industry – we were going to set the new standards! We were going to establish (from scratch) the most beloved, respected, and trusted company in the country – and we succeeded!

We all felt so proud to belong to such a magnificent company, one with clear values and a vision that we all shared and loved. Our president back then, Dr. Alejandro Ceballos, made sure he communicated that every single time he could, in any venue there was, and we trusted and believed it was so. There were many times I was working fourteen hours a day. Do you think I cared? Never ever. I was part of a vision coming to fruition and I loved it!

People lined up to get hired by that company and those of us who were inside felt grateful, blessed, and happy beyond measure to be there at that time. It was the most exciting and fulfilling part of my life as an employee, one that I would keep present in my mind to set the standard to what was to come in my future, in my own company.

But... that message and vision was not carried overseas when they brought me over.

And in retrospect, it is the very best that happened to me.

If I did not go through all that, I probably would not have enough contrast to be able to discern with total clarity what I never want to go through again, and most especially, what I will never allow anyone who works for me to experience, much less endure.

Keep Your “Why” Mentally Visible at All Times

We develop our business culture for a reason – actually, for two.

The first one was in answer to our question: “*What do I want in life?*” Happiness was the first answer, and freedom that financial success can bring along. We then built everything around that answer.

And as we were building toward it, we noticed that our desire to have our employees find their own happiness and fulfillment increased. Then, we brought this supposedly “selfish” desire to be happy into a cause, into a purpose – at first it was for us, then for our people, our team. And a new business was born, one clearly defined by *Delivering Happiness at Familia Alo* culture.

Who Do You Really Need?

Here I am going to share a golden nugget I learned from Tony Robbins in one of his business seminars some years ago.

You need to know who you are *first*, before you can answer the question, “*Who do you really need in your business?*”

Who are you in your company? Are you the creative or skilled producer? Are you the manager/leader? Are you the entrepreneur?

As a business owner, you are a little of everything. You wear different hats. But if you really want to organize a system that will scale up your business, then you need to clearly identify what it is that you do best, that you love doing most, and excel at. When you identify this, it will be easier to identify the other areas in your company that you need to delegate to people who love to do those activities and will be able to do them much better than you would.

Here is a description of each particular role:

Skilled Producer/Creative:

- Extraordinary talent, consistently meets the needs of the community they serve in a sustainable way.

Manager / Leader

- Consistently manages and meets the needs of skilled producers so they consistently meet the needs of the community in a sustainable way.

- Effective leaders have management skills, but managers don't necessarily have leadership skills. You have to cultivate or find leaders.

Entrepreneurs

- Creator and keeper of a vision.
- Attracts and effectively engages managers/leaders.
- Has enormous risk tolerance to be able to personally weather the economic and emotional ups and downs of the business and be willing to take significant personal risk.
- Works with manager/leaders to create and build a system that consistently empowers skilled producers to meet the needs of the community they serve in a sustainable way.

Each position in your company has an inherent characteristic that should fall in one of the above roles. For example, a routinary, highly mechanical task, like bookkeeping, would need someone who has the high capabilities of a manager, to keep everything meticulously organized and up to date. A graphic designer, on the other hand, is a skilled producer, so most likely will not necessarily thrive at time and organizational management but will shine in any creative endeavor.

I give you a real life example: Once we made a very costly mistake when we hired a CTO (Chief Technical Officer) and assumed that her role involved not only having very high *creative* skills (needed for innovation in a telco company such as ours) but that she would also excel at holding the *manager* role, because how can you not be excellent at project management in a high IT position?

We could not have been more wrong, and it cost us a lot of money and unhappy customers when services were not delivered on time – or worse, when many times they were delivered below standard.

And if I look back, it all had to do with time and resource management, which she completely lacked. Her fault? Not her fault, her responsibility. Our fault? Completely.

For not taking action, for not recognizing that before you can innovate you need to make sure your basic service or product has to be delivered flawlessly to your customers, and for that, you need a detailed, process-oriented manager. This "*basic business premise*," she did not deliver, while she kept bringing up "shiny objects" in our direction to innovate, to diversify.

This is how you lose the focus of your business: you stop improving what you already have every day and instead look for other new venues of sales where, many times, you need to start from scratch.

This was a very costly lesson for us.

It took us almost three years to fire her and get back on our feet again, since all our service delivery was done from within this area in our business. But again, a lesson well-learned, nevertheless. Now we have a clear vision of where we are going, and everyone is aligned and on board.

So, once again: *Who are you in the company? And who do you really need?*

They Will Find You

“So, where do I find them?” you may ask.

They will find you.

I will clarify. You do not look for them. You attract them. If you read only one line of this chapter, this is it, so I repeat: *You do not look for them. You will attract your dream team players to you.*

Don’t get me wrong, they will not fall from the sky to your lap. You will actually have to do your standard recruiting of resumes. You will still need to go to your usual talent recruit websites or may even hire a professional recruiter to give you a hand.

But the big difference is how you will present yourself to them. And to be able to present yourself in an attractive way to them you need to do three things:

1. You need to have a clear purpose, mission, or cause of your business.

If you yourself do not know this, why would an individual you would consider highly attractive be attracted to you? It’s like a personal relationship: almost everyone desires one that is deep, fulfilling, and lasting. In order for that to happen, both parties would need to want to spend time with the other person. They both have to be attractive to each other.

A dream team player will not pick you only because your current offer is higher than his current salary, or you have better benefits, or you give more vacation days, or because the job description is only “good” for them. If you see any of these between the lines in an interview,

please do yourself a favor and say, “Next!” You will regret it, for example, if they come onboard only after haggling back and forth in salary negotiation.

The first time I heard the saying, “*The prize never chases,*” was at a T. Harv Eker’s event about ten years ago. I did not fully comprehend the depth behind it, but with years of experience, I came to realize its full meaning, particularly when attracting your dream team. Do not chase people, convince them, cajole them, or influence them with any gimmick to come work for you. Resist the temptation – you will have it.

Just be very open and genuine about what your company really stands for. Saying what your company does not stand for is equally important so that they know, even before coming to the interview.

“*The prize never chases.*” So true – be it about clients, employees, or your future loved one.

2. You need to know who you really are, what you stand for, and why.

Your business is an extension of you – it has your DNA, so to speak – so you need to be able to articulate what your most important values in life are, what the principles that rule your life are, and what is absolutely non-negotiable to you. *How do you want to live your life, both inside and outside your work?*

To give you a simple example, say you believe that everyone has a life that matters outside their jobs. Of course, right? And then say something crappy happens in an employee’s life. If this particular employee asks for the day or two off to attend to a sick child or anything else, do not give them crap or the stink-eye when they get back, or worse, take it out of their paycheck.

Have a genuine concern for the problem they have and build that relationship. That is, of course, if you want them to have a genuine interest in you and your company. Always give first before expecting in return. Even if you feel you are entitled to receive because you are paying your employees’ salaries, it is way more than a mere transaction. You will be amazed to see what magic happens when you truly realize this and align your acts and decisions accordingly.

You need to clearly articulate who you want on your team. Do not just go out there and cast a wide net to see what comes your way. Be very specific. I know this might elicit you to think about discrimination laws: do not ask for age, do not ask for ethnicity, do not ask for religion, do not ask for sexual orientation, do not even ask for a picture. Really?!

Instead of falling into this trap, why don't you just make a decision that your business is a "microcosms" of a "macrocosms," meaning society and the whole wide world, and that now there really are no boundaries, no frontiers. Technology has enabled this, and it will be even more possible in the future.

So, if you decide to establish a diverse team in your company, then you will have a competitive advantage in the market. Why? Because you will have individuals who can give you different points of view based on their different sets of values and upbringing (different from yours). This is tremendously powerful. It can give you insights and contrasts to your beliefs and, therefore, innovation.

Yes, innovation is as making something better, and sometimes huge innovations happen when companies cross-pollinate among industries, countries, and people with different ways of doing things. This is much better than having a business where everyone very much resembles the owner of the company, just because the owner (in this case, you) finds it easier and more comfortable to deal with individuals who resemble his/her background and particular ethnic upbringing.

I'll give you an example. The city where I am from, Medellin in Colombia, is known both in Medellin and here in Florida by other Latin Americans to have people with very high and desirable work-ethics: hard workers, extremely resourceful, and, to top it all off, incredible service-oriented attitudes. Guess what? I personally know of some business owners who explicitly go out of their way to hire employees mostly from Medellin, or at least Colombia. Are they wrong? Are they right?

I would say short-sighted, short-term, and limiting.

Do not get me wrong, I love my people and fully recognize and value their work ethics, but we live in a wide world and our backyard is not the only playground. Where do you want to play in five years, ten years... twenty years? China arrived big time. Brazil is waking up. India has a highly technically qualified labor force at least half the payroll costs of the U.S. Latin America's workforce knows that English is a must on their resumes and, again, at much lower wages. The Philippines is a fantastic place to outsource – trust me, I lived there ten years. They speak the language and, by nature, are extremely warm and friendly people as a general rule. Open your mind and make the world your playground for diversity.

3. What other problems do you solve for them, aside from a salary?

My amazing coach, Angela Lauria from The Author Incubator, asks this question in one of her books and I think it is beyond *brilliant!*

There is a phrase I love. It became, by far, my favorite phrase over the past couple of years, and it serves me so much every time I am facing a situation I need to work on. This phrase is, “*The quality of your life is directly proportional to the quality of your questions.*”

The question, “*What other problems do you solve for your employees aside from money?*” is the *best ever question* you can ask yourself related to finding, hiring, training, and *keeping* a great team of individuals

Why? Because it forces you to really, really take a deep (and hopefully honest) look at how attractive you really are or are not as an employer. The answer to this question should be a clear list of everything you provide to your employees other than salary. And if your list is painfully short, then that’s good too. Now you know what needs to be done.

This is our list of some of the things we solve for our employees other than paying them a salary:

- *HomeOffice*. This gives our employees the ability to be able to attend to their small children or older parents. Not commuting to their place of work, not having to update their wardrobes on a consistent basis, not having to prepare lunch to-go or get lunch out every day. At the end of the day, this leads to a higher quality of life.
- *Personal growth on a weekly basis*. There is always something going on with our *Delivering Happiness at Familia Alo* program to inspire people to grow from within first, to be happy here and now. We genuinely believe that, before anything else, we are all individuals looking for our own unique way to be happy. Why not make it happen at the place where we spend the most time of our waking hours of the day?
- *Encuentros Familia ALO*. These are retreats. We do not call them sales conventions or strategic planning... we have retreats. Three magnificent days where every single employee is invited, right in the middle of nature. An all-expenses-paid, three-day weekend in a resort-like place where we take care of every little detail to make sure there is personal growth in all our activities (think extreme: white-water rafting, zip-lines, caves, horseback riding, paintball, team-building challenges) and we have great fun getting to know each other personally. We fly everyone internationally to attend.

Nothing compares to the exhilarating feeling of team camaraderie and love when we meet. (Yes, I said love. That is what you feel for your team – they are your people, and love is the right word.)

- *A lot of flexibility.* Someone has family in Europe, he goes there for his vacation and asks to stay another month to work from there. Done. Someone wanted to study English for six months in the U.S., working during the day and studying at night. Done. Someone moved to another country but continued working for us. Done.
- *We are a team with a family spirit.* We are here for each other, beyond our responsibilities at work. Camaraderie is the general rule in all interactions. We get things done for sure, but we have fun in the process. Feedback is always given with respect and consideration to the person's dignity – *"how you do anything is how you do everything."* If someone leaves for another job but wants to come back, no problem, we welcome them with open arms. A lot of companies close the doors for good.
- *The ability to feel safe and trust.* Always people first – results will follow. The golden rule: *We do not do anything that we would not like to be done unto us.* Utter respect for the human being is always first and our employees know it. We live what we preach, and when we make mistakes, we acknowledge them and make amends.

How you do business is more important than the actual service or product you sell. And how you do business has an extremely high people component.

The easiest way to see it crystal clear: McDonalds does not sell the best hamburgers in the world. I bet almost anyone could do them better at home. McDonalds' popularity is not about the burgers, the product – it is about how they deliver it, how fast it is, how consistent it is, how conveniently located they are everywhere, and how friendly their customer approach is (in most places).

One of my favorite speakers/coaches is Keith J. Cunningham, a very successful multimillionaire businessman for at least forty years, a great storyteller, funny, and with a down-to-earth approach to business every time I've had the pleasure to see him on stage. I love the guy! He talks all the time about the pivotal difference in your life that asking the right questions can make. In fact, he has a "thinking time" scheduled in his agenda to come up with questions or to answer them.

The last time I had the pleasure of listening to him was at Tony Robbins' Wealth Mastery Seminar a few months ago. Keith talked to us twice during the span of three days. He gave us a ton of insights and really good material about strategies on how to do things better in many areas of our businesses. I could not write fast enough! But I will never forget, when he got to the end, the very last slide, he paused and took his time.

He lowered his voice – you could feel he was going to deliver the golden nugget of the whole two days' presentation – and he said: *“It is about people – your people. Nothing else will make or break a business faster than the people you choose to join you and carefully nurture or let go, be that the case.”*

Step 4 Conclusion: Finding and Hiring Extraordinary Individuals to Create Your All-Star Team

This may very well be the most important chapter in this book.

In a nutshell, you need to become attractive to your dream A-players.

To attract them, you need to be willing to do some internal clarity work, which most of the time you will think you are too busy to do. Guess what? You are “too busy” because you may not have yet your very own All-Star team. You see the never-ending loop that may have you stuck in your business?

One thing is certain: you need help to grow your business and make your dreams come true.

But the trick is, you do not choose your team – they choose you, because *you are the best option for them*. And when this happens, amazing things begin to happen to your business.

Time to do the work. Grab paper and a pen:

1. Do you know who you are in your company (Creative, Manager, Entrepreneur)? Do you know what you do best? And, most important, do you know who you *need* to surround yourself with in order to develop a system you can scale up? (Make a list of your employees and place the role initial next to it. Take a deep look if this is what your company needs. Make sure you have people who excel at what they do and love it.)

2. *Do you know what problem working for your company will solve for your dream employees other than paying a salary? (If you do not know, they will be working somewhere else – why would they choose you? Do it!)*

Chapter 8

Step 5 – Progress Equals Happiness

“Happiness is not a destination. It is the by-product of making meaningful progress toward a significant goal.”

— Michael Hyatt

“Progress equals happiness. Progress is ever-ascending, ever-improving. There is no end to progress which only adds to its joy.”

— Unknown

Wonderful quotes with a depth of wisdom in them.

I believe that it takes a wide variety of experiences, particularly contrasting ones, for you to see that it is in the ordinary moments when you can clearly see yourself moving forward that you feel immense and sustained joy, more than in brief moments of ecstasy.

When that happens, *it feels like everything in the universe is working out for you*. You feel a sense of certainty that great things are going to happen because good things are already happening to you.

It feels like walking around and doing your stuff with a lighter heart. Like, when you face a problem, it really does not feel so bad, it feels like a little bump in the road, and then you move on. *There is a sense of peace within you when you feel and see progress in your life*.

Little things. I am not talking about major events in life, like graduating, getting a new job, getting married. I am talking about the little daily things: the big smile that your teenage son just gave you that tells you he sees you and connects with you. Signing up for a personal development course with your husband and learning a lot of refreshing concepts. A new client who was referred to you, was a quick and easy sale, has the potential for a lot more, and everything just flowed in. An employee who really goes out of her way to do something that is important to you and the team, and she is happy and excited to do it, and you did not even have to ask. Clients sending you good testimonials when asked. Old clients reaching for you and your services because they are now working at a new company.

These are examples that make you feel like things are moving along in a forward motion. You feel you are doing good and it keeps you motivated to continue working to reach your goals, right?

Well, the same thing happens with your employees.

They do not only need the pat on the back (like regular human beings) and the yearly salary increase. They need to see that their effort, time, and energy spent working for you and your company are worth it, and that they too are moving forward.

Or else, why would they decide to stay? It is, after all, a decision they unconsciously make every single day they show up to work.

You know when the precise moment this daily decision becomes totally conscious to them? When they receive an email inviting them to participate in a recruiting process somewhere else.

Right in that moment, they place everything on the scale, and it is here that they will look back and mentally answer, *“How do I feel working here? Do I really love what I am doing? Do I like my boss? Do I feel a sense of kinship with the people I work with? Do I feel I belong? Have I learned new things? Have I grown as an individual and as a professional? What is next for me in this company?”*

For me, one of the most painful parts of being a business owner is firing people or, even sadder, seeing one of my key players go.

It is heartbreaking for me, aside from the pain in the butt of needing to look for a replacement and lose focus, the momentary disrupter of the business momentum, and the demoralization of the rest of the team that inevitably arises. For me, what comes up first in my mind to ease the moment, always, is, *“Everything happens for a reason and that reason is always there to assist me s.”* I have come to understand mentally and spiritually that when one door closes, another opens, and that everyone comes to your experience for a certain amount of time and that time is perfect as it is.

Regardless, right after I have the conversation with an employee who is leaving, a feeling of deep self-recrimination always arises: *How did I fail this person? What promises we did not keep for him/her? Why did I not see the symptoms?* (Hint: This does not happen overnight.) *What could I have done better to prevent this?*

Especially when I know it was our fault.

The first advanced technical engineer we hired, when we were only about a year in business, was a twenty-one-year-old genius. He really was. I remember when I got his resume and I read all that he supposedly did – and I did not believe it, literally. I really thought he cut and pasted it from another resume to impress us. I had about fifteen resumes pre-selected and I decided to call him first, because I thought I was just going to “unmask him” and be done with him. He piqued my curiosity.

I called and asked away. A calm voice on the other line answered every single question with knowledge and an unusual amount of confidence, but he was only twenty-one years old! I remember turning to David, who happened to be in the room, covering the phone’s mouthpiece and making faces, pointing to the phone. “This is the guy!” I silently mouthed to David.

And boy was he! He shone from the very beginning of our journey. He was there when there were only four employees and he helped us build and transform the company in the course of the first ten years. He became our number one guy for anything and everything technical at first, and as he matured, he began being part of our strategic sessions. His deep and practical points of view shook our ground in good ways many times.

Then I feel we failed him.

We did not see the discomfort that grew little by little within him when we decided to diversify our portfolio and asked him to lead a department we thought he would love. He did it, but I am now sure it was more out of commitment to us and to the company.

He loved Telco Technology, but we asked him to dive into IT technology with our new cybersecurity and smart technology portfolio. We thought he would love the challenge, but instead, he lost his drive and passion.

To top it all off, his VP thought our Telco services and products were not as innovative and exciting as the two new portfolios she brought onboard. So, our guy stopped seeing his future in Alo, he stopped dreaming, and he lost the vision because he was not anymore emotionally linked to it – he lost his passion. I remember he kept telling us the company was losing focus and we just thought, “He is not taking change well and just needs time to adjust.”

And the sad thing is, he was right.

We did lose focus. We did lose sight of our niche, where we were the best at what we did. We became one more undifferentiated provider in our two new markets because we did not have

the experience nor the intrinsic knowledge about the real pains and needs of these new type of clients.

Problems started pouring in: unsatisfied new customers, poorly delivered projects. Improvising and extinguishing fires became the norm every day. I look back to those days and remember the time with a knot in my stomach.

We did make revenue, don't get me wrong. We did sell many projects... but they came at a very high price: our peace of mind, the motivation of a lot of our most valued team members, and a high turnover of our most beloved and trusted individuals, who quit because this was no longer the place where they felt progress was happening.

He was one of them. He quit.

We were in shock.

We offered him more of everything in a desperate attempt to retain him. He never hesitated or doubted his decision. He loved us dearly, in many ways expressed over the years, but our company's focus (or lack of focus) did not appeal to his heart anymore.

We think that we are logical beings – we pride ourselves in that – but studies have shown in many ways that we are emotional beings above all else. We make decisions with our emotions and feelings, and then we rationalize them and articulate them to make sense.

We learned our lesson: *when perceived progress stops, happiness stops.*

I am happy those years are gone, and since then, we cleaned house. We are more focused than ever, we found our niche again, and our team is motivated by the clarity of our roadmap. We have an incredibly highly talented and committed team, we are back to enjoying what we do on our day-to-day, and when this happens, results follow.

While Change Is Automatic, Progress Is Not

The only constant in life is change. Things will change whether you like it or not, whether you want it or not. It happens without planning it – it just is. Everything changes, all things material and non-material. It is a universal law.

But progress, on the other hand, is not automatic.

Progress results from actively and consciously making deliberate choices to create the life you love – the life where you can't wait to jump out of bed in the morning because you are growing, contributing, impacting, and serving.

So, while nice salaries and bonuses may excite your employees for the instant gratification, the only thing that's going to make them happy and stay with you long-term is knowing they are making progress.

The Key Word Is “Perceived”

Perceived progress.

You can raise salaries once a year – that is progress for sure.

Or you can still raise salaries by the same amount of money in a year but do it every four months – that is perceived progress. *Employees are much happier because there is an ongoing sense of perceived progress.*

Define an easy to understand and implement a salary increase policy and schedule.

You can do it just monetarily, tied to time. For example, if you anticipate an employee's raise to be \$500 a year, just divide this by three and increase the salary every four months (assuming that the employee meets all the requirements of doing their job as expected).

Take the opportunity every time you make an increase (or at least once a year) to have a performance evaluation. It does not have to be anything fancy or long – it could be ten questions that will guide you through a conversation. Make sure you ask employees to auto-evaluate themselves with the same questionnaire so that there can be a two-way conversation.

Everyone needs to know where they stand, how they are doing, and what there is to correct. The meet-my-expectations guessing game erodes motivation and desire to improve. The “*you are still working here, is that not enough for you to know you are doing okay?*” model is not good enough.

Or even better, a little bit more complex to implement but in the long run much better for building a team that is constantly and ever improving, *is to let each person decide how much of a salary increase they want every year.*

Yes, that same amount that you estimate should be the yearly salary increase, divide it again by periods (every three months, four months, six months) and make it part of a skill training program. Lay out the complete program content associated with the increment at the beginning of the year. The employee can choose to do the training or not every period. It is up to them if they want a salary raise or not, which becomes their new base salary. This way, you are providing both salary increments and skills training. This is the very definition of perceived progress.

Another great way to start with progress in mind is when hiring someone new, define in your payroll cost structure the proposed salary for each position in salary bands and offer new employees the lower spectrum of the band. Once new employees complete their first thirty days, do an initial job evaluation and, if the person performed as expected (no real results expected here – you want to see attitude, resourcefulness, people skills, and how well they blend with the team), give them a 10% increase. This will blow their minds. You just did something not expected at all and they will feel instantly recognized and rewarded.

From Within First

Promote from within first. Always. Make it a rule whenever possible.

As your business grows, it is so much easier and more comfortable for you to hire new people from outside for specific new positions that open up. You already have employees trained in their current positions doing well. If you move them within to a new position, it may feel like having to train not one but two individuals. Do not make the mistake of this assumption.

Always be open about current employees' ability to participate in the selection process for new positions. Be very clear about the requirements and the experience needed for the jobs, and if someone from within participates in the process and does not get it, make sure you give them feedback and encourage them to continue their training in specific areas they may want to pursue in the near future.

They have to be able to see that there are possibilities to grow in the company as long as they commit to always excel in what they do and to increase their personal and professional skills.

Connectedness and Purpose

To us, they go hand in hand.

Our culture, *Entregando Felicidad en Familia Alo (Delivering Happiness at Familia Alo)*, is about deriving personal joy and fulfillment through our work in building a successful company that serves our clients the best way we can.

Strong social connections make people happier and help teambuilding because everyone is more engaged. So, as a whole, the teams are more productive, yielding results without anyone

looking for the spotlight since everyone acknowledges the efforts and actions of each individual. This is much easier to accomplish when you are working among friends.

We treat each other as friends. *We are a team with a family spirit.* There is no hierarchy distance between our CEO and our newest customer support specialist. And that is particularly important to us because we do not have the physical interaction in an office, since we all work HomeOffice.

On two occasions, we fired individuals who, after just one week in the company, were not treating their teammates well and did not care at all. These were big mistakes in our interviewing process but ones that were corrected immediately, even if the individuals' resumes were outstanding. We place utmost importance on this – there is zero tolerance for any behavior that is inconsiderate, rough, or disrespectful with any team member.

We believe that nice people finish first because they have the leverage of other people wanting to work with and for them over a long period of time. No matter how brilliant a person is, if they violate boundaries on recurring occasions, there are just so many times, “I am sorry, it won't happen again” can be accepted. It always leaves a mark.

Step 5 Conclusion: Progress Equals Happiness

Now you know how important is to align your personal purpose with the purpose of your business to be able to sustain actions to reach your goals.

You also know that to hire really attractive candidates as part of your all-star team, you need to become highly attractive first, and be able to clearly articulate what problems you solve for them aside from paying them a salary in exchange of their time.

But hiring highly talented individuals as part of a committed team is not the end of the journey. Creating a great company to work for and having smart, skilled, and good people are important parts of the equation.

Now you need to find the way to keep these people and keep them motivated. That is your biggest and most important role in your company.

1. Are you willing to analyze your current salary increase policy and adapt it in such a way that there is perceived progress by your employees? If you are, mark off a couple of hours now in your calendar.

2. Are you willing to define and implement periodic performance evaluations?
Yes, they are tedious to do, but trust me, they are a key component to keeping your most valued employees. You need to know who they are based on results, not based only on perception, and they need to know where they stand and how can they improve. Just as you did above, schedule this task, so you will be able “to have more time” in the near future.

Chapter 9

Step 6 – Integrity and Communications

“As you think, say. As you say, do.”

— Anonymous

To me, integrity means thinking, saying, and doing anything you stand for in a coherent and consistent way. The thing is that people think that integrity is a high virtue or value, when in fact it is meant to be the bottom-line base to start from.

Please, take a minute to let that sink in.

Integrity has to be the foundation of the business you want to build. It is so important that I don't even think it should be a value in the sets of values you outline for your company.

Why? *Because integrity is at the base for all of your values to exist and to be lived by you and your team every day.* Most particularly by you, the business owner and leader of your team. Integrity is the signature of a true leader.

There is nothing more damaging to the wellbeing and growth of a company than a leader who is not coherent in what he says and how he follows with his actions.

Everyone is watching you. You are the one who has to hold everyone accountable. You are the one who sets the standards, and that begins with you. The thing is that trust is *so* hard to earn – it takes time and shared experiences – but it is so easy to lose over a simple decision not consistent with the values you told everyone you hold sacred. It is easy to say it, but to act accordingly, believe me, you will get tested time and again.

I clearly remember the day David came to me to tell me that our sales VP just came out of a call with one of the largest and most important banks in our market, our prospect at the time. He was talking with the person from the purchase department, who was the last decision maker. It was up to him to decide which vendor met all their requirements.

Needless to say, it was a very, very important call.

Acquiring that particular client not only meant a very good deal in monetary terms, but it would give us a tremendous credibility boost in our client portfolio. It was a strategic client to win, and we had to do anything it took to get them, even if it was to sell at cost for that first project.

The call started very well. The representative was very accommodating and talkative, and he reiterated a few times to our VP that we were at the top of the list, and that he worked extra hard to help us comply with all the requirements, asking us back and forth to complete certain things.

All this because he liked us a lot, he said. He understood how tenacious we had to be to fight our way up as the underdogs we were in the market (our competition was major telco enterprise companies). Here comes the catch... toward the end, he very clearly stated that it would be so nice if we could help him get out of a temporary hiccup he was having with his daughter. She wanted a very expensive Apple laptop for her first year in college, and he was short of cash and he wanted to ask our VP for a loan. He said it would make his daughter so happy. And, of course, he would pay our VP back as soon as he could get out of a few debts he had.

Mmm... so... what do you do? It is so tempting to “invest” \$2,500 as a “loan to a friend” who promises to pay us back, right? In exchange for thousands of dollars in future revenue and a great and recognized logo to be added to our client portfolio. But then, if you compromise your values this way, how do you face everyone on your team eye-to-eye when you ask them to be honest and to uphold integrity in everything they do? How do look at yourself in the mirror? And if you start here, where do you draw the line? How much is your peace of mind, your word, and your honor worth to you?

Needless to say, we did not close that deal that time around, but we did later, on our terms. And as the saying goes, *“How you do anything is how you do everything.”*

Integrity, once again, is the signature of your character, and a leader is nothing without a character to uphold the promises and the vision of his team. He is the one who keeps the flame on.

Another example: Jon Huntsman, Sr., is a multibillionaire who started a chemical company from scratch and grew it into a \$12 billion enterprise. His book *Winners Never Cheat* is filled with stories taken from his own experience in which he always refused to compromise his principles. Huntsman says that integrity is the reason that he is as successful as he is. “There are no moral shortcuts in the game of business or life,” he writes. “There are, basically, three kinds of people: the unsuccessful, the temporarily successful, and those who become and remain successful. The difference is character.”

Second Part: Communicate It!

The only requirement a leader needs is to have followers. To have people follow your cause, you need *clarity* to be able to articulate and communicate your vision, your purpose, or your cause with your heart in a coherent and disciplined fashion.

The reason causes have beloved leaders like Martin Luther King, or Mandela, or Gandhi is because these people were able to *inspire* masses of people toward a common cause. They all started with a purpose, with a very clear *reason why*.

They all wanted to do something significant, something to alter the *status quo* that people were living and suffering in, namely in the United States, in South Africa, or in India. It does not matter what culture – we all share universal values that we are willing to die for. Each of these three leaders inspired people to unite and stand for a common cause that would change their societies and countries forever.

They all had one thing in common: they inspired people to action.

Great leaders not only touch our souls and hearts with inspiring words, they inspire people to act. When you inspire people to join your cause – your business in this case – there is a sense of deep belonging to a group that has a clear purpose.

When you are motivated to act because you identify yourself 100% with the cause, *this motivation is deeply personal*. In a business that has a clear purpose, the employees will act because there is an intrinsic motivation that is deeply personal; they will do their jobs because they want to, not because they have to. This goes beyond salaries and bonuses.

We are very blessed to live in a country of abundant opportunities and freedom, so we do not have to be concerned about primary needs of survival or basic human rights violations. Still, we live in another type of jungle – the business market jungle – and it can get really bloody. Competition is merciless and finding your dream team members can prove to be very challenging if you do not start with purpose from the beginning.

The great thing is that I believe, and I can see a conscious awakening happening now. Every day more, people are looking not only for business success and wealth but also for happiness, joy, and fulfillment in their lives. The same goes for the individuals who chose to develop a professional career. The need is there for both you and them. Make the encounter possible when you establish your purpose, your values, and your own culture identity, and communicate it coherently and consistently.

Where to Start?

When you are a small business with a dozen employees (more or less), it is easy to go without an explicit and standard message. After all, you are there all the time, they take directions from you, and they get to see and hear you interact with clients, vendors, and providers. The message (even if it is not clearly defined, just inferences they make out of watching and listening to you) about how you believe things should be handled can still get across.

Whether you are a solopreneur, have a handful of employees, or have a few dozens of them, it is very important that you start clearly defining the different aspects that delineate what your business culture looks like, so that everyone will have the framework from which decisions can be made. This way, everyone is on the same page as to how you expect them to interact with your clients, among themselves, and with your vendors.

Your company's values should not be a list of grandiloquent words that sound very nice or look very nice on your office's wall. *They should resonate with you at your deepest level.* They should be your guidelines for hiring and firing, for committing to a client or letting him go. If you are not willing to do that, then they are not really "values." They are just nice sounding words.

Our *Delivering Happiness at Familia Alo* started taking shape from the very beginning, but in a very implicit way based on a few personal principles you've heard me mention before:

- *"I want to be happy here and now during the eight hours a day I work."* This was a common desire I shared with David and it was at the basis of everything we wanted to do. Our challenge was how to take this personal desire and actually live it in our business. So, the first thing, which seemed obvious, was to hire people we actually liked working with. Then we took a look at their qualifications. It was never the other way around – that much was clear.
- *"I will never do to my employees what was done to me."* I turned my bad experience around and I wanted to provide a place where our employees felt they could trust that we had their best interests at heart, a place where they would be appreciated and in a safe environment for them to be themselves and thrive.
- *"My word is law and I don't lie."* This is the simple version of one of David's core values as a man. He brought this to our company. He easily builds rapport with people; they easily trust him. I am sure that they can see and feel he is genuine, and I am absolutely sure it has to do with this intrinsic value he upholds.

- *“I want to have fun.”* Another of David’s core values in life. He has his inner child very much present at all times. And he brought this energy to our business. It is very common to hear him say, “Hey, let’s do this and let’s have fun!”
- *“We always face our clients when there is a problem.”* No hiding, no excuses, no lies. Ever. Particularly if it is an instance where we clearly messed up. There is no finger pointing at any other directions to diffuse responsibility. These were not written anywhere – they were communicated during interviews. For sure, our actions spoke louder when we made a decision and we explained why- these being the principles behind those whys.

Still, they paved the way to what later would become our business culture based on *Delivering Happiness at Familia Alo*.

Growing Pains

Then we started growing. The first seven years’ growth was slow but sure. Things were still very much manageable with a dozen or so employees in a business model that was not directly labor intensive – we had our engineers technically connect a client to our switch and just watch as traffic began to pour in.

If ever there was a technical problem during those days, we outsourced all our technical platforms and the support we received was really very good.

When we decided to specialize our service portfolio, we had to hire more people. And around year seven of our business, and upon implementing all the amazing stuff around our business culture, we grew over 700% in two years. With that, we had to significantly increase our number of direct employees in six of the main cities in Colombia, Venezuela, and the U.S.

At that time, it became more and more important to explicitly define our values from which we wanted to develop our business culture.

What Inspired Us?

Both David and I had a common aversion to defining our business values.

We both came from the corporate world in Colombia and we experienced how corporate values were usually a list of good attributes that we heard once during training and never again.

We saw them hanging on the president's office wall or during a corporate event where they were mentioned here and there and then just forgotten.

We did not want that to happen to us. But that was what we both were exposed to and we thought that was the only way.

Of course, I had heard the notion that more satisfied employees are more productive. Of course, we were trained in how to lead and motivate our team for high performance and such at our previous jobs, and in how important it was to define a mission and a vision (by the way, I always got them confused!). I mean, this is the usual stuff we got to learn at school, in our MBAs, and our corporate work.

Until the fateful day we both read the book *Delivering Happiness* by Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos, and they did it in a completely different way!

When we first read how a mega successful company had their whole business culture based on employees' happiness, we felt an immediate and profound connection to that cause, to that purpose. We knew we had been right to choose that road, even if it was still at the moment just a dirt road, so to speak!

That book described what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it by building it in our own company. It literally brought me to tears. Hsieh had made explicit, clear, and concise an ideal that we had but did not know how to articulate in words.

We did not know how to put it into an action plan – we had not even tried to do it explicitly because we wrongly believed it was not “corporate enough” to talk about happiness as a goal. What we did not know then, that we know for sure now because we proved it with tangible results of growth in our company, is that, “*Keep your employees happy and they will take care of your clients,*” is absolutely true – but not only for the mere reason of selling more, of making a lot of money.

If you choose this road (which is not for everyone), it has to be something that you, as a person, believe in at the core of your being – your desire to make a difference in the lives of others.

Your desire for their lives to be better because they met you and, in a little or big way, were inspired to take actions toward a happier and fuller life. The business is just the vehicle to do that.

Today, we sell telecommunications services and products. Tomorrow, it may very different, but our core values and our purpose will remain the same.

Our Values

These are our values; these are our guidelines. Many times, they have served us to make complicated decisions. We keep them present; we live by them; they inspire us to be better human beings every day and to better serve our clients.

1. Deliver *wow* through service.
2. Embrace and drive change.
3. Create fun and a little weirdness.
4. Be adventurous, creative, and open-minded.
5. Pursue growth and learning.
6. Build open and honest relationships with communication.
7. Build a positive team with a family spirit.
8. Do more with less.
9. Be passionate and determined.
10. Be humble.

Here is where I give full disclosure: These are Zappos' values, too. We got them from them.

The first time we tried our exercise to come up with our own values, David and I made a long list. There must have been at least a hundred different values we both thought were important to have. We kept editing the list, we asked ourselves what we valued most in the people we liked to work with, and we asked ourselves what principles were non-negotiable for both of us.

At the end, we came out with a list of about twenty. It was still long, and we discussed it with two of our key employees then. They looked at our list and, of course, what was not to like? Things like emotional connection, passion, a positive attitude, open communications, trust, and constant growth were there.

When we showed them Zappos' list as an example, they loved it as much as we did, and upon a lot of discussion, we ended up thinking, "Why can't we use this?" We could have written them – even the one about being a "little crazy" was our way of always saying "let's have fun!"

And so, we did. We adopted Zappos' ten core values and made them our own, our own way.

You may make your list or do just the same as we did. If any of these values resonate with you, go ahead, adopt them.

The important thing is not whether you “copy it” or you make it original. What is really important is that you agree so much with them that you can actually commit to live them and inspire others to live them as well. This becomes the most challenging part, because you will need to have discipline to ingrain them in all recruiting and training processes as well as all your internal business culture communications.

***Conexiones* – Our Internal Newsletter**

Conexiones is our internal online newsletter, made by us and for us! It was born to communicate all that is going on in the company every two months, but we do it with a twist: *it has to be fun and funny!*

We have permanent content like our: the editorial from our CEO, our values, our chronological family tree (which we update with our new family members), what our slogan, *A Business with Soul*, means to us, and some videos and photos of our retreats and special events.

And then in each edition we have new material, like a section where we place a photo and a-fun-to-read bio of our new family members. We have a section with a game or contest we prepared, we have interviews with a twist for current members (always some crazy and funny questions), we have articles for each area where they share with us something new they’ve accomplished, we list birthdays and anniversaries, and we also share personal growth concepts and/or exercises like a guided meditation or simple ways to detox – I am the one who usually writes this section, and I love it!

It takes time and effort to put this together every two months, but it is very important to have a tool where you can communicate on a permanent and fun basis with all your team members. Our people have told us many times that they look forward to every edition. It helps them feel closer to everyone else and to get to know them, especially when all of us work under a HomeOffice business model.

Joycom – Our Mascot Corporate Messenger

Yes, we have a mascot! A “*my simpatico*” chimpanzee named Joycom with the biggest smile and the whitest teeth you have ever seen. He is a looker!

We decided we needed an internal messenger to be the one talking constantly about our values and welcoming our new team members. He is the one who sends birthday e-cards, anniversary emails, Christmas invitations, and congratulations for any milestone we know someone achieved in our company or in their personal lives. Everything extracurricular we do and need to communicate, Joycom is the messenger. We gave him a personality and he even has a wife, Joisy, and kids. He is part of our family. We made him come to life in animation for specific purposes. It is so much fun listening to him singing Mexican “*rancheras*” when there is a birthday celebration!

That way, when we communicate something that is not from our human development area or even from David as the CEO, David’s voice does not get worn out in the multitude of ways we communicate.

Encuentros Familia ALO – Our Yearly Retreats

As I mentioned before, we fly 100% of our employees from three different countries, ten different cities, to one location surrounded by nature and ecological activities, where we spend three amazing days having fun, growing, and getting to know each other much better and in a totally different light than just working.

This event is the highlight of our year; we all look forward to this weekend. We prepare everything to *wow* the employees, from notes and gifts in their rooms every day to fantastic and deep self-growth presentations and workshops conducted by renowned speakers and teachers.

The extreme activities we do allow our employees to see themselves in a “lab environment” where teamwork, determination, and conquering your fears are literally tested.

It is so rewarding for David and me to witness transformations and to truly enjoy our employees’ company as friends just having fun. There are hugs and tears of joy at the end of each event during our closing ceremony. There is love, only love, in these events. And how do you think that translates when we go back to our daily routine? At our homes? With ourselves? And, of course, in our business? I do not even need to answer that for you; I know you know.

The deepest moments of joy I've had in our company have been during and after these events, not watching our bank account grow – this only reinforces our belief that it is only when you do something that is bigger than yourself that you find and sustain happiness and joy in life.

This is how we live the phrase, *“Happiness is the journey, not the destination.”*

Monthly Company Videoconference

Once a month, we do a videoconference for two hours where David and I communicate what is going on in the company and we all see each other. This is where we get to talk about new members, new and big opportunities, any great news that we may have, or even motivate a particular outcome we are looking to achieve.

Sometimes each VP will also participate, but since they have their weekly meetings, this one is for us to be more on the general side of things and keep everyone informed. If a particular month was low in sales, it is here that we will inform everyone and ask them for a push in anything they are doing to change that. It is always approached positively. We look to bond the team together in times of difficulty and we ask them to raise a hand if they need any help to accomplish their goals.

Sometimes it is not even us who talk. We invite speakers to share golden nuggets or to give some words of wisdom or motivation to reconnect us to our hearts when the “busyness” disconnects us.

***WhatsApp* Group Familia ALO**

We created a group where we share our winnings, good news, jokes, and motivational phrases. This is the place where everyone says good morning, where we see someone having a cup of coffee or having a great lunch, and where we do our “corridor talk.” It is always fun, and we have a strict rule: no politics or bad world news, only uplifting news or requests if anyone needs particular help.

These activities are what we do in addition to our daily and weekly meetings, where we follow up on results, indicators, and activities from our yearly strategic plan.

It takes discipline to constantly communicate and to build, little by little, your business culture. It does not happen overnight; you will not have “happier, more committed employees” in six months, but you will lay the foundation for that brick by brick. Always think about the long-term benefits. These mentioned above are the avenues we have found work best for us in our HomeOffice business model.

Step 6 Conclusion: Integrity and Communication

Integrity is the signature of a leader. Communication is his/her most powerful tool.

How you articulate what you stand for, what your vision is, and how you intend everyone to get there as a team is the most important task of this book for you.

1. *Are you willing to spend a few “thinking sessions” by yourself, and later with your team, to write, prioritize, and determine what the values of your company will be?* These will be the guidelines to make day-to-day decisions, particularly the determinant decisions that we business owners have to make that may alter the course of our companies.
2. *How will you communicate your vision, your purpose, and your values in a consistent and fun way?* This is of the utmost importance. It is the way a message begins to permeate in all communications avenues possible within your company. It is only through constant repetition of a few common messages that people begin to think, feel, and speak the same language. Once a month or once a year is not enough. Enroll someone from your team who you think would love to lead this project. It is a lot of fun and it is highly rewarding.

Chapter 10

Step 7 – Business Models to Speed up Freedom

“Most people overestimate what they can do in one year and underestimate what they can do in ten years.”

— Bill Gates

There are some companies that make the decision to have a portion of their employees work from home. There are some other companies that decide to hire a portion of their employees overseas or abroad as part of their business model.

In our case, we merged both.

HomeOffice and Hiring Abroad

Our company was born under both business models merged into one: we started with a small office from home and our first employees were hired abroad working from their homes.

And it was the best decision we made.

Our phenomenal and high-quality life-oriented business model was born, and I can tell you from my heart that there is not a day I don't give thanks for being able to live and work this way. It is one the biggest blessings in my life.

Our first company was incorporated in the state of Florida on a hot day in July 2002. Our second company was incorporated in Colombia ten years later. We have employees in the United States, Colombia, and Venezuela, in ten different cities, with people of different nationalities and backgrounds. We have made it a point to hire the best people and we are not restricted to a fifty-mile radius of a physical office.

I have to say that our decision to do both at the same time was mostly made out of financially limited resources at the time with a lot of optimism and a firm belief that we would make it work.

David and I complement each other very well in our business and work approach.

David is more on the optimistic side: he sees the glass half-full, and that is always encouraging for everyone around him and me. On the other hand, I could say that I approach the

glass half-full with gratitude, but my attention tends to go to the half-empty glass – I am always looking to improve things and to raise the bar. My mind is constantly asking questions as to how things are being done now and how they could be done better, faster, easier. With years of experience and maturity, I came to understand that what is important with this glass philosophy is that you can always choose to have a full pitcher of water next to you to fill the glass when needed. And with that image, completing the glass philosophy, *you access an empowering belief system of abundance and possibilities that are not tied to your current situation or “reality.”*

So, when we took our baby steps toward working from home (it was new for both David and I – we both came from the corporate world, where we had nice corner offices) and later we hired our first employees in Colombia, it was always with an open mind and knowledge that we would make necessary adjustments on the way.

We went ahead and took the initial risk, and it paid off.

Little by little, learning and correcting along the way, we began hiring under this business model. We grew, and I can say we owe a great part of our success to *our Delivering Happiness at Familia Alo* business culture, which includes as one of its core building blocks our HomeOffice business model.

We are on the way to our seventeenth year in business and we expect many more to come under this model.

So, What Does it Look Like?

These are some of the great benefits we all enjoy thanks to our business model today:

High Quality of Life: Working HomeOffice is not important to our business model as much as it is important to our company purpose and culture. We believe high-quality work and a high-quality lifestyle are not mutually exclusive. Our team works hard, but we are equally passionate about the hours we spend away from work with family and friends and pursuing our passions.

We want to show that *we walk the talk*, and high quality of life is a priority – we don’t have to commute and spend life-precious time in transportation. We are home in case our family needs us to be there. We can move around, we are not tied to our homes, and we can work from any place that has an internet connection.

Only our regional sales directors and pre-sales engineers are required to be hired in specific cities to serve our business clients in that particular market. Everybody else we can hire in different

locations, and that gives us a lot of flexibility and a broader spectrum to choose from highly qualified and amazing individuals.

Lower Costs: Yes, this a big benefit. We save money in office rental and operation, office supplies, insurance, equipment, utilities, anything needed to run a physical office. Instead, we use this money we save and we invest it in our amazing *Encuentros Familia ALO*, our retreat trips to get everyone together to grow, learn, and have fun!

Another very important economic factor is that our wages in Colombia and Venezuela are much lower than those in the United States. Having clients billed in dollars and having wages paid in pesos can help you hire more highly qualified people who otherwise would be more challenging to afford in the United States. This helped us grow our business, as we were able to use this capital to develop our services, systems, and platforms to enable us to compete in the big leagues.

Vacation Traveling Can Be Longer: This is a mega plus for us. We can spend our full summer travelling, where we combine vacation time and working time in our schedule. We often travel for two to three months, where we can combine days of being completely off and know that our incredible team has everything under control.

When we went to Asia for two months, we were able to work half days and do sightseeing on half days. Yeah, time zone management was a bit tough sometimes, but hey... I am not going to complain now. We do it because we can. Our system is in place to allow us to enjoy this, and we do!

Relocation is an Easy Option: This gives our employees great flexibility. If they need to relocate, they do not need to quit their jobs. We are always open to discuss possibilities, and in 90% of the cases, we have been able to work it out.

How Do We Do It?

First of all, make sure you have a fantastic recruiter in-house or hire someone to help you. It is worth every penny. Find someone who can do it on the side of her/his job. A professional recruiting company will usually charge one-and-a-half times the salary offered or around that depending on the profile of the position you are looking to fill, it can become very expensive this way.

This decision is key.

You will not be able to recruit by yourself in a sustained way. It takes a lot of time and effort to find, select, and interview the first group of candidates. I personally did this for the very first years of our company, and it took a lot of energy and time. But I felt I had to do it because it was of primary importance to ensure that everyone complied with our business culture profile, being that everyone was working from home.

Later, as we grew, the first part of finding and preselecting was done by our recruitment director and we participated in the final interviews. We still do. We do not hire anyone who has not had a one-hour conversation/interview with us. We do it all online, so the more eyes that can “feel” the vibe of the candidate, the better.

Contract and Paying Wages: In Colombia, we hire employees through our local corporation and follow all Colombian labor and tax laws. But during the first seven years, when we only had our U.S.-based corporation, we hired them under a service contract *but* we would make sure to give them all the benefits of an employee hired with a regular employment contract.

And we made very clear to each of our employees that, to us and in all aspects of our legal and working relationship, we would consider and treat them as our direct employees.

Venezuela is a very tricky case to handle. The banks do not allow dollars to come in, so we need to do all payments through a local agent who either pays employees in dollars or in their local currency, whichever they have previously chosen.

Their Start-Kit Tools: We provide all our employees with a laptop, a VoIP phone connected to our corporate PBX (meaning they have their own extension), and we pay for their internet service.

Depending on their position, they may need other equipment like a printer or fax machine, and we provide for that as well. If the employee ceases to work with us, he/she is asked to return the equipment.

We also provide them with an ID, business cards for those who need to see clients, and their business email signature (ours has a photo). They are included in our office general directory (with photos as well) and they are sent a welcome email by Joycom, who talks about our values in detail. We make it a point to use every little instance we can to make them not only feel welcome but “physically” present in our company.

HomeOffice is a very attractive model for some professionals, particularly those who’ve had a taste for it in the past. They have realized how much the quality of their lives improves when

working from home. So, for a small percentage (and it is small because HomeOffice is not very common in Colombia and Venezuela, where we have most of our employees), we become more attractive as employers.

Our Ten Guidelines – ALO HomeOffice

We use these ten points to train everyone in the way we do HomeOffice. For 80% of our new employees, this is a new way of working.

1. *A Change of Working Paradigm:* HomeOffice demands a change in the way you believe work is to be performed at an office, a physical space your employer designates. We believe that we can accomplish the same or even better results because it adds a high quality to your life, like not commuting every day, saving you money in transportation and clothing, and providing you with flexibility if you need to attend to a personal situation at home – you will be present. This therefore contributes to your overall wellbeing and happiness.
2. *Your HomeOffice Attitude:* Our attitude makes the difference in our team. Working from home will require from discipline, responsibility, and accountability to perform your duties and reach your objectives. A good and proactive attitude goes a long way in this type of environment, and it will greatly help you in communicating with your teammates and leader. We aim to develop a team with a family spirit, as one of our values goes.
3. *Your Tools:* A laptop, telephone, internet, Skype, and group chats will be your best mates for your work. Use them responsibly – they will help you keep connected on a daily basis with your team. You are never alone, just a click away or a phone call away.
4. *Your Workspace:* We recommend you have a space reserved for work in your house, a place where you can concentrate and you can have meetings without much noise around. It is important that you feel comfortable in your working space.
5. *Your Personal Appearance and Dress Code:* Yes, you are working from the comfort of your home. We highly recommend that you get ready every

morning and you dress the part to do your job. It can be comfier than regular office clothes, but we advise you to not make it a habit to work in pajamas or sweatpants. “How you do anything is how you do everything.” Look the part, feel the part, and do the part. You can be called at any time for a videoconference with a client, a teammate, or David. Be ready.

6. *Educate Your Family:* Your family or whoever you live with has to be very clear that this is your job and you are working, and they should respect your time and space to do so. Sometimes our family members or friends think since we are home, we are available at all times. It is very important that in order to keep up harmony at home and your performance at work, you clearly tell members of your household that you need the time to work uninterrupted unless it is an emergency.
7. *Your Time Management:* Be very punctual. That is one of the top priorities in our list of how we do things under this HomeOffice way of working. We don't see you. If you don't show up on time on a regular basis, we will think it is because you are not around, and that is not a good place to start this relationship based on trust. If you have a problem meeting a deadline or getting to a videoconference, just let the other person know. Be conscious of time zone differences as well. And also, when it is time to turn off your computer at the end of the day, we encourage you to do so and enjoy your family or your hobbies. It is about balance.
8. *Establish Your Daily and Weekly Goals:* HomeOffice can be distracting sometimes. Be sure to stay on top of your goals, keep them present. Make a habit to evaluate your own progress on what is expected of you. We don't chase anyone around to do their jobs. Especially in HomeOffice, it is very important to build reliability and trust with your teammates. They are here always to help you as long as you are there for them too. Many of the outputs of your activities affect the whole team.
9. *Avoid Distractions:* Set yourself up for success. If you know that having the TV on will distract you, turn it off. If you know that you need to drink water regularly, take a big gallon of water to your space, so you do not need to get

up to your kitchen and get distracted on the way. Do what you would consider necessary to avoid unnecessary distractions.

10. *10.) Managing a Contradiction:* HomeOffice for a lot of people means “working alone,” which contradicts itself because you really have unlimited communication with the wide world through the internet. Your attitude and your imagination will help you build close and warm relationships with your teammates, clients, and vendors.

We are Familia ALO and we are here for you.

Step 7 Conclusion – Business Model to Speed Up Freedom

To me Freedom means to be able to choose how I want to spend my time.

You decided to invest your time, money, and energy to open your own business so that you do not have to “punch in” for eight hours a day... but now that you do have a business of your own, *you* have to work for ten or twelve hours a day to keep it all together. *Do you feel free?*

I discussed how working from home and hiring abroad opened widely our possibilities for growth, both because of cost efficiencies and because of quality of life that made our company attractive to highly-skilled employees, and made our life a lot easier and more enjoyable (just cutting out the commute to an office is a big plus!).

It is, for sure, the path less travelled, and it takes time and extra effort at the beginning to make it work. But once does, it can really become a growth accelerator for your plans.

If you want to explore these two options:

1. Schedule in your agenda the time to analyze these options for your business. Your first reaction is to lean toward the “way things have been” in the past and to feel comfortable there. Work with team members you think can add value to the discussion from the operations’ point of view. Always ask, *“Let’s find a way to make this idea work,”* to open up their minds.
2. Make one list of all the processes that are part of your core business and make another list of all the supportive processes. This is a project for you it in the near future: *Which of those you need to be carried out on your office premises and which could be performed remotely, either in the same city or in another country?*

3. Start analyzing wage costs in English-speaking countries, where you can outsource highly skilled labor at a fraction of your actual costs. One word of caution: It is not just about maximizing your personnel cost-effectiveness; it is about building a business culture that can successfully support this model of employment. It is about one happy and united business family, no matter whether we are thousands of miles apart or are from very different idiosyncrasies. As long as we share a common goal, we can become a highly-functional team with a family spirit.

Chapter 11

From Intention, to Decision, to Action

“The only impossible journey is the one you never begin.”

— Tony Robbins

Congratulations! If you are here, you are part of a select group of 3% of people who finish reading the book they started.

And I am not referring just to the act of reading, I am referring to you having an intention to change something – anything, really – in your life.

If you are here, it is because you are a businessman or a businesswoman looking for ways to grow your business and you know you need help-your present and future employees are critical in that equation, and this book “fell into your lap.” Someone recommended it to you, or you bought it because something on the cover caught your attention, or maybe someone gave it you, knowing the topic would resonate with you.

However, know that if this book ended up in your hands, it is no coincidence.

Wherever we place our attention, consciously or unconsciously, energy flows, and your powerful thoughts are like a magnet that brings closer to your experience all the components that will help you create what you are wishing for your life.

For a while, most likely you have been pondering questions such as:

- *How do I grow my business?*
- *How do I make real money?*
- *How can I enjoy more my day-to-day in my own business?*
- *How do I find, hire, and retain all-star employees?*
- *How do I create a work environment where people help and trust each other more?*
- *How do I create a business culture that will help me create an scalable system so that I do not have to be so involved so much in daily operations?*
- *How can I make my employees and myself happier at work?*
- *How do I make a difference in other people’s lives?*

But that it is easier said than done, right?

Let me clarify that for you.

What you read in this book is actually not rocket science stuff. It's a rather simple guide to implement activities that must be done on a regular, consistent, and disciplined way *once* you align them to your purpose. The commitment to action is the challenge here, but know that the rewards will blow you away, if you stay the course.

So that *intention* was turned into your *decision* to read this book cover-to-cover and milk the concepts that resonated with you and your business.

Good! Making a decision gets you halfway there. "*Your life can change in three seconds,*" they say. *Yes, because that is the time that it takes you to make a life-changing decision and say yes to your dream.* How would a *yes-to-your-dream* decision look like in your life and in your business?

- *Yes, because I really want my business to grow and be successful!*
- *Yes, because I really want to enjoy my company!*
- *Yes, because I really want to enjoy working with my team!*
- *Yes, because I really want more time for me and my family!*
- *Yes, because I really want the life of others to be better just because they work in my company!*
- *Yes, because I really want to have a magnificent life, I want to live my dreams!*

Now, if you feel you want what you just read in your life, *this is the time for you to act.*

Say *yes*. Out loud. Decree it to yourself and send a clear message to the Universe that from today on you will procure the necessary steps, meetings, and discussions with whomever in your company you need to get involved to make the steps in this book a reality.

Why don't you stop for a minute and schedule that next meeting? That would be turning your decision into action. *When you schedule something it becomes real.*

Always remember, there are three decisions that control your destiny, and these are:

1. Your decisions about what you choose to focus on.
2. Your decisions about the meaning you give to things or your story.
3. Your decisions about the actions you will take to get to the results you want.

Need a tiny bit more of a push? Ask yourself. "*What is the cost of not taking action now? How many more years will I live with my current situation? How many more years will I continue doing the same, or more of the same, expecting different results?*"

It is later than you think.

It might sound ominous, but it is the truth. It helps to put life into perspective. *Time is the most expensive currency you can ever spend.*

How are you spending your time in your life, in your business? Is what you are doing every day paying off for you, financially, professionally, and, most importantly, personally? If you need to work hard to make your business function every day, why not work hard toward what is proven to work?

A business culture based on purpose and passion will give you the profits you so desire in a sustainable way. And now you know you do not have to do it all by yourself; it does not have to feel overwhelming or impossible to do, because it is not.

Don't be "realistic," dream, and dream big.

Your future does not have to be equal to your past or worse than your present. You chose your future with your thoughts, with your dreams. If you keep your eyes there while you take actions aligned with that future, it will be a reality, faster than you can imagine.

If you were reading this book consistently, taking notes, and answering some (hopefully all) of the questions, then you have started your momentum forward. *But momentum needs to be fired up by actions – if not, it will die and you will go back to more of the same, and when you least expect it, a decade or two would have gone by.* Keep moving forward, do not get distracted by your everyday "busyness."

Take the first baby steps to create the business culture that will give you financial abundance, freedom, and happiness.

I love my life and I wish the same for you, on your own terms. And I owe everything to my choices (the good and the bad of course!), first realizing I needed to become more, to grow personally.

Then taking the steps that little by little gave us enough momentum to bring our business to the level we desired and to the life that we love, cherished, and are enormously grateful for. A life that gives us peace of mind because we know that our financial needs and the needs of our loved ones are taken care of.

The first step to getting anywhere is deciding you're no longer willing to stay where you are.

Have you taken that step yet?

Any reason (I called them excuses) you may have now to stay where you are only means that you do not think your dreamed future is worth the time, effort, discomfort, energy, or money you need to invest now to get started.

Is this you?

If not now, then when?

Yes, it takes action, but know you are not alone. There are people out there looking for a place to work for like your company and for someone like you and what you stand for.

And how do I know that? Because if you reached this far in the book, that tells me you care about people, you decided you want both money and happiness in your business and you want to make a difference in your life and your employees' lives and you are now ready to do so.

Chapter 12

Dream Big, It Is Possible

“If you can dream it, you can do it.”

— Walt Disney

As I ponder these last words to you, my heart opens with the love of the universe for you.

Dream big because it is possible.

Know in your heart that you are a warrior, a business warrior, and we are connected.

You are brave, even if at times you do not feel brave.

You have in you everything that you need, even if at times you do not feel that way. Open your heart to your dreams, and it will be the best ally of your mind.

“The longest journey in your life will be from your head to your heart,” the Sioux Indians say. How true and wonderful the journey can be, if you choose to make it so.

We are here for a reason, and that reason is for us to live life to the fullest.

Everything in the universe is abundant, as is in nature. We are part of the universe and nature; we are, by definition, abundant. Our thoughts are limitless. You can dream and wish big.

Do not be afraid, do not doubt yourself, and do not limit yourself.

Be kind to yourself. Every day is a new day, every day you can start again.

Find your purpose, be clear about it, take it to your company, and nurture it like you would an infant until it learns to walk and then run.

Be patient, especially with yourself.

Open your heart, follow your bliss... there you will find your purpose and life will never be the same for you or for everyone who is a part of your team and part of your life.

Deliver happiness to the world.

Now you know how.

~ So be it. ~

Further Reading

- *Secrets of the Zen Business Warrior* – Lina Betancur
- *Delivering Happiness* – Tony Hsieh
- *Make 'Em Beg to Work for You* – Angela Lauria
- *Secrets of the Millionaire Mind* – T. Harv Eker
- *Satyen Raja*, <https://warriorsage.com>
- *Being Happy* – Tal Ben-Shahar
- *Human Design and The Divine Matrix* – Gregg Braden
- *The Passion Test* – Janet Attwood
- *Think and Grow Rich* – Napoleon Hill
- *As a Man Thinketh* – James Allen
- *The Power of Awareness* – Neville Goddard
- *I Can See Clearly Now* – Dr. Wayne W. Dyer
- *You'll See It When You Believe It* – Dr. Wayne W. Dyer
- *Ask and It Is Given* – Esther and Jerry Hicks
- *Getting into the Vortex* – Esther and Jerry Hicks
- *The Secret* – Rhonda Byrnes
- *Authentic Happiness* – Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman
- *Awaken the Giant Within* – Tony Robbins
- *The Money Game* – Tony Robbins
- *Hiring for Attitude* – Mark Murphy
- *The Story of Purpose* – Joey Reiman
- *The Lean Startup* – Eric Ries
- *The Key* – Joe Vitale
- *From Good To Great* – Jim C. Collins

Acknowledgements

When I sat down to make note of all the individuals for whom I am so grateful, I felt a wave of love and gratitude encompassed me. I just finished writing a book that yes, revolves around a business topic, but at the end of the day, it is my life's journey over the past twenty years.

And I know now more than ever as I contemplate my life that I would not be here if I did not have the privilege and blessings of so many individuals who touched my life in such profound ways.

First, my family. David, my husband, love of my life, soulmate and fun-partner; he is the co-creator of the joy and happiness in my life. We have walked every step of the way together. Our individual paths of self-discovery and self-growth, both in our business and personal life, have been hand-in-hand. He is always there for me; I think I must have done something really good in another life to deserve such a beautiful soul as my partner in this life. Thanks also to our children, Tamara and Daniel, who have brought me so much love, wonderment, laughter, and inspiration to be more every day.

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To every person who has passed through our company, to every person who gave a piece of their lives because they believed in us, they believed in our purpose and came onboard on this extraordinary business and life-building journey together, *thank you*. I love each of you and what you brought to my life and to our team.

To the Author Incubator team and to all my fellow authors, thank you for being there every step of the way, the support, the questions, the answers, the tears, the laughter, the thrill of the shared accomplishments that inspire me to aim always higher because I see it is possible, thank

you! It has truly been incredible, beyond my wildest expectations. How the purpose of my life expanded to embrace much more of who I can become, who I am becoming every day. *It is one little step at the time.* Special thanks to Angela Lauria, my amazing coach; to Aisha Bascaro, my incredible house captain coach; and to Bethany Davis, my incredible editor, who made this process a loving breeze.

“Success leaves clues.” To all those who paved the way and came before me to show me the clues. So many authors, coaches, and teachers who I have turned to and have made my mentors and daily companions in my journey, *thank you!*

To you who are reading this book, thank you for trusting me and sharing with me the desire to live a magnificent life on your own terms. For choosing abundance of all that is good in life and deciding to make a difference in other people’s life. *“Passion is for you. Purpose is for others”* – Carla Moore

To my Creator, to my guiding lights who are always with me and embrace me with love, light, trust, courage, certainty, clarity, appreciation, and gratitude, always guiding me to remember *who I really am* and what I came here for, thank you, we are one, I love you all.

Yes, it is my personal journey, but it feels so good to know I am never alone and to know that *all is well, always.*

About the Author



Lina Betancur is the founder of Zen Business Warrior Academy and author of bestselling books *Secrets of the Zen Business Warrior: 7 Steps to Grow your Business, Feel Excited and Stay Motivated, Again* and *Millionaire Business Culture: 7 Steps to Create an All-Star Team to Help You Grow Your Business, Work Less, and Enjoy What You Do More*.

She is a *coach-sultant*, helping fellow entrepreneurs make it happen – not just applying theories, but applying her more than seventeen years of experience – and most importantly, sharing golden nuggets of how to enjoy the ride while getting there.

She is now mastering the art of living a happy, deliberate, and fulfilled life. She believes that every day is a magnificent opportunity to create the life that we are each meant to have by re-discovering who we really are and by linking our personal purpose to our business purpose: how to make a difference in other people’s lives while creating financial abundance.

The desire to help others knocked on her door about ten years ago when she transformed the organizational culture of her company to one of *Delivering Happiness at Work*, soon transforming from the inside out and giving birth to their slogan “*A Business with Soul.*” Since then this approach has marked a clear difference in the way they lead the company, a difference in the way the employees work and thrive and specially a difference in their customers’ experiences. This has created growth for the company, their employees, their customers, and their vendors.

This knock became more insistent, requiring Lina to play bigger and expand to combine her spiritual life lessons with her down-to-earth, no-nonsense way of getting things done that has marked all her professional life. Writing books and finally extending her guiding and inspiring coaching outside of her circle of influence became the natural next step.

“It is about the journey, it is about who you really and how you can make a difference,” she always says.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a double major in Marketing and Management and an MBA. She is bilingual and has experienced the diversity of living in many countries. She had a rising career for ten years in leading industry corporations and for the past seventeen years she has, together with her husband, led her company into a successful telecommunication and technology multi-portfolio B2B in the Latin-American market – a process marked with many challenges, winnings, and priceless personal and entrepreneurial lessons learned. Over the past fourteen years she has committed herself to personal growth, learning from and being certified with business and life masters such as Anthony Robbins, T. Harv Eker, Gregg Braden, Abraham Hicks, Wayne Dyer, and John Kehoe among many others.

Lina is an avid reader, amateur chef, passionate traveler, proud mother of Tamara and Daniel, and partner-lover-best friend of husband David. They live in South Florida with their cat, Lili.



About Difference Press

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Thank You!

Thanks for taking the time to read *Millionaire Business Culture*. Many business owners believe that making their businesses grow to the levels of wealth they desire depends on titanic work, considerable financial funding, special skills and knowledge, and many times sacrificing of the quality of their personal lives.

I find that the most powerful – and fastest – ways to grow your business to the next level are two main principles, to follow with passion, determination and always, a touch of fun:

1. *Play with the best.* Surround yourself with the best A-Players. Those individuals who you will love to work with and those who would not work anywhere else but with you.
2. *Follow the clues to success.* Others have gotten there first, so learn all you can from them and follow their lead.
- 3.

If you really follow the whole *Millionaire Business Culture* formula, you will realize that what you thought business culture is all about is very different from what is special about the one I write.

If that was the conclusion you reached as well, would you like to know how your business culture is *really fairing* right now? I put together a *Business Culture Quick Assessment* that you can download totally free at <http://zen.linabetancur.com/bcassesment>

Find out. My gift to you.

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