

THE TAO OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

52 Lessons in Applying Spiritual Principles to Business Ownership



MARCIA BENCH

PRAISE FOR THE TAO OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

"I keep this insightful book on my desk constantly and refer to it any time I want 'just-in-time' inspiration. Marcia brilliantly articulates how spiritual principles underlie all the day-to-day issues today's entrepreneurs face - and helps us see the truth behind the circumstances. In today's complex business world, this book provides the guide you need through the sometimes rough waters of business ownership. You will learn how to overcome obstacles - once and for all - and reach new heights in your business that you didn't even know were there. A 'must read' for every entrepreneur!"

--David Neagle, Million Dollar Income Acceleration Coach

"This book inspires us to work with our hearts as well as our heads. It is a gift to all of us who hunger to bring our whole selves to our entrepreneurial work."

--Richard J. Leider
Founder, The Inventure Group
& bestselling author of Repacking Your Bags and
The Power of Purpose

"There are plenty of guides on how to DO entrepreneurship, but very few on how to BE an entrepreneur. In The Tao of Entrepreneurship, Marcia Bench provides simple, thoughtful lessons on developing an entrepreneurial spirit. It's the perfect resource to start your business day with a few moments of inspiration or to help you get through the rough spots on your entrepreneurial path."

--C.J. Hayden
Author, Get Clients Now!

"Every entrepreneur needs encouragement along the journey of growing a business. This book not only offers you unconditional encouragement but also thoughtfully reveals the necessary mindset for entrepreneurial success."

--Michael Port, author of Book Yourself Solid & The Think Big Manifesto

THE TAO OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP: 52 LESSONS IN APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES TO BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

Marcia Bench

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Introduction and How to Use This Book

Dear Reader,

There are lots of how-to books on the market (I've written some of them!) instructing you how to start your business, how to market it, and even how to sell it. But there are precious few books that really help you take on the mindset of the entrepreneur. And literally none that help you become purposeful in your business - that is, living your life purpose as an entrepreneur.

Starting and growing a business is about much more than just taking the steps of giving it a name, writing your business plan, setting up your web site and creating products (although those are all important components). Truly successful entrepreneurs also bring their purpose to their work, every day.

"Tao" means "the way." The purpose of this book is to help you adopt the thinking patterns, the mindset, and the attitudes shared by the successful, Purposeful Entrepreneur™. You will find that owning a business is truly a way, a path, not just a series of activities.

I have spent more than two decades learning the lessons shared here, and have coached hundreds of clients and spoken to tens of thousands of people about them. But not until now were they compiled into a form you can use as a daily and weekly guide to reinforce this new mindset - and use it on an ongoing basis.

For many of the lessons, I have provided definitions and origins for the words used to enhance your understanding of them (as opposed to our common use of the terms) and to deepen your learning. This book truly came through me, not from me. I believe it is the Divine speaking to you through me, with important wisdom that will make remarkable changes for the better in your business - whether you are just starting it or are a seasoned business owner.

How to Use the Lessons

I recommend that you read through the book once lightly, perhaps turning to the topics that particularly appeal to you right now and reading them first. Then, use the book as a year-long template for Purposeful Entrepreneur™ development, taking one lesson each week and reading it in the morning as you begin your day. Reflect on it, and take it into your meditation if you have such a practice. Notice what issues it brings to light in your daily business activities. If you look for it, the word of the week will help, challenge and inspire you.

I wish you success, fulfillment, and the glorious unfoldment of your purpose in your business and in the world.

--Marcia Bench

1. Desire

What do you truly desire, deep within your heart? Are you living that life, fulfilling that dream, doing that work, right now?

De-sire literally means "of the father." This is the voice of your highest self beckoning you to a new future.

Desire is the seed of any business. The entrepreneur starts a business based on a desire to fulfill a dream to do business differently (perhaps following corporate disillusionment), to have more fun, to increase his/her fulfillment and sense of contribution, or just to try something different than he/she has done before.

As your desire beckons to you, how will you respond? Will you believe the small thinking of non-entrepreneurs around you that "you can't start a business now," "what makes you think you can do that?," "is there really a market for that?" or "can you really make money at that?" Or is now the time you will finally "go for it" - and claim your own brass ring?

Author Raymond Holliwell has said, "No desire is felt until the supply is ready to appear." That means that the very fact that you have a desire to start a business - or to change or grow one you already own - means that the means to fulfill your dream already exists, right now.

Common thinking says to be sure you have the money first, before you hire someone or go on that trip or invest in a web site. It would tell you to wait till the timing is just right before you jump.

Hogwash.

NOW is the time for you to move, if you are feeling the desire to do so. Your desire is your Inner Voice, your Divine Inspiration, telling you that your unique gifts are ready to express NOW in a new way - through your own business.

All that is required of you is that you decide - I AM going to start this business, I AM going to invest in that educational program and learn the new skills I need, I AM going to meet with that successful business leader and learn what I can from him. Once you decide, then the money, the people, the resources, the time - whatever you need - will appear, in perfect time.

The first step to success as a Purposeful Entrepreneur™ is to identify your desire, and give voice to it. Tell just one trusted mentor, coach or colleague what you really want...and that you are going to take the steps to bring it into reality soon. (But don't spread the word to the world just yet...) How does that feel?

“Once the desire is clear, the way will appear.” Giving voice to the desire will likely inspire you with one next step you need to take in the direction of that desire. You won’t get the whole plan at once. When you know what that step is, and have taken it, you are ready to move on to the next lesson.

2. Trust and faith

There is a type of entrepreneur who steps out in full trust in his own human abilities, relying exclusively on his intellect and drive to achieve to launch and grow his business.

That is not the kind of entrepreneur I am talking to here.

To be a Purposeful Entrepreneur™ requires that you have faith that Something bigger than you is really “running the show.” You may or may not call it God - it may be Mother Earth, Universal Spirit, or just The Presence...but for you to feel confident that this desire you have is your destiny, you must know that it is coming from the highest part of you, your Higher Self.

Once you clear that hurdle, you can relax into the unfolding of your business, knowing that you are being guided, led and inspired by this presence into the highest and best version of what you are here to do.

You will be asked to trust this Presence, both initially and as your business grows.

Think of it as a practice, rather than an event.

Every day, with every task, you have the choice to come from your head or from your heart, to act from Spirit or from your (sometimes limited) human knowledge. And virtually every time you act from Spirit, things will come out better than you could have hoped.

In what do you have faith? Do you trust that Something wiser than yourself is guiding you in your business as well as other areas of your life?

We are not talking about any specific religion here. Rather, we are suggesting that you trust in a Power, an Entity, or a Force bigger than you that is beneath and behind all that happens, and all that is created. Your particular practice in connecting with that deity or power is a personal choice.

When you walk this path of trust, it is as though you are walking along a path on a foggy morning. You can see the next step in front of you, but you won't see the one after that until you take the one you can see. But as you do so, you trust that there will be another step, and another, and that the destination is your goal, whether it is launching your business, filling your coaching group or practice, enrolling people in your seminar, or achieving a financial goal.

Trusting in a bigger plan than you can see gives you the courage to dream big, to go after all of your desires and goals, and to know that you are supported every step of the way. This is important because each time you reach a goal or achieve the fulfillment of a desire, another desire and an even bigger plan will emerge.

Nature's essence is ongoing expansion, ever more life. So you can release the expectation that someday you will "get there" - and trust that you'll always be in the process of "being there."

How much can you trust the unfoldment of your dream?

3. Courage

Entrepreneurship is not for the faint of heart! It takes courage to say what you want - and go for it. "Don't die with your music in you," as the quotation by Peter Duggan goes. But it may feel safer if you never let it out!

Suppressing your dream and "playing it safe" is the equivalent of playing not to lose. You will be much more successful - and experience much more personal power too - if you play to win instead.

Courage is "the ability to face danger without fear." Entrepreneurship is not so much about danger - at least not the way the cavemen experienced it! But since 7 of every 10 new businesses do cease to exist beyond their first 2 years, you must have the courage to overcome the odds, to make it "in spite of," - and to not worry about what people think of what you're doing.

Everything worth doing in life takes courage: asking that special someone out on the first date, standing up in front of the class and giving a report, confronting someone you love about what's bothering you, moving to a new city - or finally admitting "I can't take it any more" as an employee and starting down the path of business ownership.

The word "courage" comes from the Latin root meaning "heart," a common metaphor for inner strength.

To have courage in your business and life is to follow your heart.

Entrepreneurs are an independent group...they have strong opinions and are usually eager to voice them. (Of course, this is also why they get fired from traditional jobs so frequently too!)

Starting your own business finally gives you permission to do things your way, to set your policies, and to reap the rewards for the risks you take. Once you have the courage to give voice to your desire, it doesn't feel like a risk as much as something calling you to take action. The time comes when it is more painful to try to fit the square peg in the round hole - and conform to the corporate mold - than it is to step out on your own and carve your own destiny.

Fear and courage are actually opposites. Fear makes you play small and shrink from the task, whereas courage beckons you to your greatness and urges you to expand. You may find you have to walk through the fear to discover your courage.

When you do, courage gives you strength to stand up for yourself, your own dreams and desires. And the rewards are many. You finally experience the fulfillment, creativity and self-expression you have longed for, but which can only be found (for the true entrepreneur) in your own business.

4. Overcoming fear

Notice that the title of this lesson is not “eliminating” fear but “overcoming” it. To eliminate fear entirely is to stop growing - and all of life is either growing or dying, there is no in between.

To continue to grow, then, whether you are starting your business, stepping it up to a whole new level, or launching a new product or service, fear will arise. You are hard-wired to experience fear whenever you step into something new. It is actually part of the process!

The question is what to do when you feel it.

The dictionary defines fear as “alarm and agitation caused by expectation or realization of danger.” Once again, “danger” is not the woolly mammoth charging us, but simply our feeling unfamiliar with the experience we are facing.

When you feel fear, the first thing to do is to stop. Breathe slowly, ask yourself what you are afraid of, and watch with a sense of detachment as your inner self provides the clarity you seek.

It is important to stop because fear will literally paralyze your mind - and especially your creativity - if you allow it to dominate your emotions. It is physiologically impossible to make good decisions or to think clearly when you are under the influence of fear. So don't try to!

If you imagine all of your prior experiences as being contained within a bubble called your Comfort Zone, then this new experience - e.g., starting a business after being an employee for a dozen years - would be outside the bubble. It feels like you don't have your bearings, that you don't know what to do - and the thoughts of disaster and ruin can quickly take hold and cause your stomach to tie itself up in knots.

At such times, simply acknowledge fear as though it were an old friend: “Oh, hello fear, I see you have come to visit again.” Notice where you feel the fear in your body. Can you isolate the sensations as being in your stomach, on your sweaty palms, or in another place? If so, close your eyes and send light and healing energy to that part of your body. Invite it to speak to you, to tell you what it is afraid of.

Then, ask your Wiser Self this: “What do I need to know, or whom do I need to meet, to bring this experience within the realm of my Comfort Zone?” Wait for the answer. It will surely follow.

Then, take the action you are led to take. If it is helpful, make a list of the worst things that could happen if your fears came true, and then rank them as likely or unlikely to occur. Ninety percent of what we fear never comes about anyway...but confronting it head-on can remove most of its power over you!

Finally, shift your attention from the fear to the dream, your desire, the thing you want to do that has brought the fear into your consciousness. Concentrate on the reasons why you want to do this (e.g., start a business), the benefits it will bring you, and what is exciting to you about it.

Then ask yourself: where did the fear go? Answer: the fear dissolves when you focus on what you love, the positive energy of your idea, the reasons you know it will work - versus the fear that it won't.

Love always dissolves fear. Being on purpose, and taking action to express it in your daily work and life, allow you to be pulled into your purposeful business, instead of derailed by the inevitable fear that will arise from time to time.

Allow the fear to serve you, not to stop you.

5. Creative expression

To start and grow your own business is to say “yes” to your inner creativity - to be willing to allow it to express through the products and services you offer. Raymond Holliwell put it this way: “Business is an expression of man’s highest aim, man’s religion.”

For some entrepreneurs, this means “building a better mousetrap,” improving on existing technology, or filling an unmet market need with a new product or service. For others it means inventing something new. But in each case, four things are true.

First, there is nothing truly “new” under the sun. Every invention, every new technology, every innovation, comes from arranging pre-existing elements, ideas and concepts into a new form. This should encourage you! You do not have to “create something out of nothing”; you simply need to rearrange what already exists into a form that appeals both to you and to the customers who will buy it.

What you need already exists; you simply need to listen to your inner guidance to see how it needs to be blended, arranged - or turned upside down! - to become the service or product you have imagined.

Second, the purpose of your business is creative self-expression. One of the primary motivators of the Purposeful Entrepreneur™ is to find an outlet for the ideas and creative energy pent up within him/her. You have likely been frustrated in past work experiences that others would not listen to your ideas for how things could be done better, streamlined or enhanced. You knew you had a great idea - but “they” did not find your idea to be within the company’s policies or mission or goals...so your ideas were dismissed.

In your own business you finally get to give voice to what is important to you - and no one else can tell you “we don’t do that here” or “I don’t like that idea.” It’s up to you! And fortunately, what usually happens is that your audience - your client base - so enthusiastically responds to what you share that it is even more rewarding than if you had offered it through someone else’s company as an employee. They often wonder where your offering has been all these years!

Third, your creative expression comes through you, not from you. You know that Something greater than you is guiding the process. And when you write or speak or draw or sing or create or invent or interact with customers, it is the Ultimate Muse, the “Divine Download,” that you receive and that is moving through you, expressing itself as that activity.

This means that your job is to say “yes,” to be open, and to release all distractions and resistance that would keep you from being a clear channel through which the Divine can flow. (This is also what we do as coaches: show up, be fully present, bring our best coaching skills to each session - and let the magic of the coaching space do the work.)

Finally, creative expression, for you, is not a luxury but a basic need. Others among your family and friends will not understand this - so don't expect them to! You need to express yourself creatively just as much as you need to breathe, to eat, to sleep and to hydrate yourself. Without an avenue for the creative energy within you, you develop a kind of "creative constipation" - and its side effects include unsatisfying relationships, unfulfilling work, physical illness or disease, and overall emotional malaise. The dammed up energy of unexpressed creativity simply finds another substitute outlet...or turns on itself physically, emotionally or relationally.

As you learn to trust the wisdom within you, know that you have a high calling on your life, and that expressing the creative urges you feel is an important part of that. Being a business owner will give you the freedom, the space, and the avenue through which to do this most fully. And your clients' and customers' eager response will be its own reward!

Want your own copy of The Tao of Entrepreneurship? Visit <http://www.purposefulentrepreneur.com> today and click Products!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marcia Bench is a Marketing and Business Strategist for Purposeful Entrepreneurs, with more than 23 years' experience coaching, training, and speaking to entrepreneurs. A Master Purposeful Entrepreneur Coach,[™] she has been coaching and consulting both individual and corporate clients since 1986. She is CEO of Purposeful Entrepreneur Enterprises, LLC <http://www.purposefulentrepreneur.com>, Founder/Director of Career Coach Institute, LLC, <http://www.careercoachinstitute.com> as well as other coaching companies.

A former attorney, Marcia has authored 22 other books. Her latest are Career Coaching: An Insider's Guide (High Flight Press 2008) and Career Infopreneur's Success Roadmap (High Flight Press 2007). She is currently working on the forthcoming Purposeful Entrepreneur's Success Blueprint, due out in summer 2009.

Marcia has been a featured speaker/trainer at over 500 local, regional and national conferences, as well as a guest on numerous television and radio programs. Her mission is to help individuals increase their sense of enjoyment and meaning in their work.

Marcia's coaching experience includes work with managers and executives from Fortune 500 firms in a variety of industries as well as dozens of business owners, professionals, and military officers entering the civilian workforce.

Prior to entering the coach training industry, Marcia was Senior Vice President in a dot-com career management firm for 4 years, and previously spent 10 years as President of New Work Directions, a business and consulting firm she founded. Ms. Bench developed her expertise in business start-up and management in part through her 4 years as a practicing attorney specializing in business and employment issues. She is a current member of the International Coach Federation.

Marcia's education includes a Juris Doctorate from Northwestern School of Law of Lewis & Clark College and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Western Oregon University. In addition, she is a Certified Career Management Practitioner through the International Board of Career Management Certification, a Certified Business Coach, a Certified Teleader and Master Certified Career Coach.

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RESOURCES

If you have enjoyed this book, we urge you to not stop here! Do visit us online at <http://www.purposefulentrepreneur.com> for an ever-expanding variety of resources to support you in your business start-up, mindset shifts, and growing your company. You can even learn how to coach Purposeful Entrepreneurs if you wish!

Following is a summary of the resources available as of this writing:

Coaching Services

Individual and group coaching services, both live and via telephone, are available with Marcia Bench (and, in the future, with coaches trained through Purposeful Entrepreneur.com). We have found coaching to be one of the most powerful and effective ways to help you blend spirituality with sound business principles, using regular mentoring and proven business models. For details on the current programs, visit <http://www.purposefulentrepreneur.com> and click on "coaching".

Live Events and Speaking Engagements

Marcia periodically offers teleclasses, as well as live workshops and retreats for her clients, readers, and the public. (Private retreats for your group can also be arranged upon request). To be notified of upcoming events, visit <http://www.purposefulentrepreneur.com> and click on "classes and events". Also register to receive our regular ezine, Purposeful Entrepreneur Times, there. And to hire Marcia to speak at your event or for a media interview, contact info@purposefulentrepreneur.com or call 877-51-PURPOSE.

Certified Purposeful Entrepreneur Coach Training and Certification

As the Purposeful Entrepreneur™ movement explodes, there is an rapidly increasing need for people to coach these unique thought leaders, coaches, speakers, authors and other independent business owners. We offer a 16-week certification program via teleclass (and in the future, via live training) by which you can become a Certified Purposeful Entrepreneur Coach™. A Master Purposeful Entrepreneur Coach™ training is also available for graduates of the initial level of training. For details, visit <http://www.purposefulentrepreneur.com>.

Purposeful Entrepreneur Books, CD's, and Other Products

Marcia's other books and many CD's, DVD's, pre-loaded mp3 player, and more are available both at <http://www.purposefulentrepreneur.com/products.html> and at her online store at <http://www.coachingwebstore.com/>. Volume discounts available for purchases by groups, for workshops, or to accompany Marcia's speaking engagements.

Business Building Support and Training

Marcia's CCC Business Acceleration System™, a two-volume manual for launching and marketing your coaching business, was newly revised in 2009. Teleclasses also available to guide you through these important stages of your business. Visit <http://www.careercoachinstitute.com/bas.html> for details.

Purpose, Passion & Profits Mastermind

Would you like to stay on the leading edge of the emerging Purposeful Entrepreneur movement? Would you enjoy getting personal access to the leaders in this exciting community?

We have created our Purpose, Passion & Profits Mastermind program just for you - you get a monthly call with an expert hand picked by Marcia Bench, the founder of Purposeful Entrepreneur.com. We also send you the CD of the call - and occasional bonus gifts too! Get a two-month free trial membership at <http://www.purposefulentrepreneur.com>

Blog

Marcia also maintains a blog on Purposeful Entrepreneur trends at <http://www.purposefulentrepreneurblog.com/> - feel free to register to be notified of new posts.

Career Coach Training and Certification

Marcia's blended learning approach to learning career coaching and getting certified have changed the lives of hundreds of people worldwide. If you want to learn coaching skills and develop career design and job search mechanics expertise - as well as practice coaching in real time and get feedback - you will want to explore our career coach training. You will join a worldwide community of coaches with a similar passion for career coaching and the same fundamental approach. Visit <http://www.careercoachinstitute.com> for details on training programs that lead to certification, as well as "a la carte" courses.

Don't see what you're looking for? Contact our customer service team at 877-51-PURPOSE (877-517-8776) within the U.S., or email us at info@purposefulentrepreneur.com. We are here to support your success!