

# Part One

## ATTITUDE

Before you quit and take that *Leap!* you need to be prepared. Not prepared in terms of stacks of research, focus group feedback, business plans, spreadsheets and projections. But prepared in a much more essential way.

You need the right kind of MINDSET. In your approach to work, in how you generate ideas, and what you think is important.

It's like a philosophy. It's an ATTITUDE.

## 1

## Starting out

A blank screen, a blank page in a notebook or a blank canvas.

If faced with that blankness, it can be scary.

What to write?

How to start?

But then once you start, it's easy.

(Hey I am on line 6 already – see what I mean?)

And you always have to start somewhere.

To get the starting bit right you're going to need a lot of discipline and dedication. And you need to recognize that 'passive' is just not an option, so you'd better delete it from your vocabulary.

You've got to be constantly active, developing thoughts and plans, posing – and answering – a whole load of questions to yourself.

So before you do anything, before you *Leap!* you need to deal with the essentials. And then you can get started for real.

So ask yourself some questions:

**!** What do I really want to do with my professional life?

**!** What do I want to achieve?

- ! What will make me happy?
- ! What have I always wanted to do, but never done anything about?
- ! What is holding me back, what are the obstacles?

Lose those inhibitions and set some goals of what you want to achieve.

And once you have done that, you're already started.

## 2

### Make sure you're hungry

If you are going to succeed in your *Leap!* you have to *want* success. You have to be hungry. Because if you're not, someone else will be. And that someone else is your competitor.

If you are only accountable to yourself, and especially if you work from home, then you have to be even hungrier, because it's going to take more discipline.

If you're lazy or want to do the bare minimum to be successful then forget it – it won't happen. If you're one of those people

who like working in a company where you can turn up and hide behind your screen all day, pretending you are working hard, then listen very carefully:

- 1** Your
- 2** Days
- 3** Are
- 4** Numbered

Success is not the result of a half-hearted investment of time and effort. It's a commitment. It has to be all or nothing. A total 100% commitment or nothing at all.

That's not to say you can't balance multiple projects or even multiple businesses, or balance working with childcare. It just means your mental investment has to be absolute.

3  
Passion wins

As well as your commitment, you have to be passionate about your business. If you've gone into an area of business because you think you can make money rather than because you have the passion for the product it will be tougher to succeed.

You may have identified a piece of software that you think will make you rich. But unless you really believe in it, live and breathe it, you might not have that passion. And passion will give you the edge. There's nothing worse than a salesperson giving a performance for a product you know they don't rate or love.

So you need to ensure that you have motives other than just wanting to make money when it comes to your business. Of course you don't need to have created the product itself to have the passion to sell it. I sell design-led solutions for clients but I'm no designer myself – I have designers who do those bits. But I'm passionate about the power of good design in business, about good branding and effective communications. I believe in that fiercely and could never sell something I don't believe in. Even if the client sector or subject matter is, on the face of it, 'boring', I make sure I get passionate about it. If I can't, it won't work. With every project, every brief, I get under the skin of the client and their target audience to make sure our ideas are effective and successful.

If you are stuck for 'The Idea' of what kind of business you want to start up, focus on what you are passionate about. What is your hobby or interest? What do you know a lot about? Because it's easier trying to sell a service in a sector you know lots about than trying to cold-call in one you know very little about.

Let your business be a reflection of your personality and your philosophy in an area you know lots about. Getting that bit right is a good step towards success.

## 4

## Get known for being a safe pair of hands

Make sure you are a 'can do' kind of person, because you need to be a 'can do' business to succeed. Where competition is fierce and when you've just started out, 'can't do' will get you nowhere. Because clients like passing problems and challenges to suppliers who say 'we can do'. Your success in the relationship is about being able to take away the headache from the client.

And, similarly, you'll want to recruit those kind of people on your own projects. Because when you've won a piece of business or have a project to deliver you don't want your team to start saying they can't do things. Our budget was tightened on a project for a client. I asked my own supplier, 'Is it still feasible on the reduced budget?'

'It's all do-able,' came the email back.

Music to my ears. And any client's ears. And that's why we have a relationship that works, why we have projects that deliver and clients who'll come back for more.

So get a reputation for someone who *does*, and aspire to be seen as a business that is a *good safe pair of hands*. Because whilst being a good safe pair of hands may not make you *Entrepreneur Of The Year*, it's what winning and retaining clients is all about.

## 5

## Be distinctive

To win and retain business you need to be distinctive – and that means being different. Maybe in a superficial way: a fresh brand identity or website in a sector where all your competitors come across as boring. Or in a more intrinsic way: with a really unique offering, providing a bunch of services that no one else is providing under one roof.

I met a bloke who runs a small business locally, a company in the financial sector that does things differently. No suits. No stuffy offices. No conventional website.

A cool sofa instead of a boardroom table. An innovative customer referral initiative. An MD wearing flip-flops and shorts ... in November. OK, at worst a bunch of gimmicks, but don't knock them – they are making an effort, they have a shedful of ideas, they have *balls* and they are out there. No reluctance to try new ideas, no lack of confidence for just getting out there and trying stuff. No ideas sitting getting dusty on the shelf – they are actually doing something about them, trying them all out with no fear of failure. Being pioneering and original in a sector full of stuffiness. No business school methodology, no marketing hot shots, just some damn good ideas.

Ten out of ten for guts.

## 6

## Don't bullshit

Don't lie.

Whilst inevitably there's a lot of bullshit in business, don't deal with people who lie. Potential team members who lie about their achievements or clients who lie about their commitment. In a world where trust is so important to business relationships, steer clear of bullshit. Be honest in communications, in pitches and meetings. Don't bullshit your achievements, abilities or credentials. At worst your lies will be obvious because you cannot back something up; or it may sound like a load of arrogant bravado.

I had dealings with this guy who promised me this meeting and that project, saying he had emailed me when he hadn't; saying I had said something when I hadn't and it all got a bit tedious. When it comes to you and your business, lying will get you a bad reputation or you'll get found out – or both.

A colleague told a few white lies in a job interview, that he'd been responsible for something that was his boss's achievement. That might seem innocent but it's a small world and his little lie could easily be disclaimed. In a single phone call it could all crumble. Sure, you need to choreograph your career history, to spin it in the most positive way, but don't jeopardize your reputation.

You need to get known for your reputation and being decent in business. Because there are lots of sharks out there and it pays

to offer the tell-it-like-it-is, bullshit-free solution. Clients will find that refreshing.

You are the brand. Your reputation and your intellectual capital is all there is.

Don't mess it up.

# 7

## Perception is everything

First impressions count. That first meeting, that first phone call, that first email, that first proposal. Make sure that first impression is the best impression you can give because that's what clients will remember. How you greeted the client, that handshake, the eye contact – all those parts of your body language are important.

As are your business communications. Whilst you want to stay clear of bullshit, remember the importance of perception. A website that punches above its weight in terms of style and professionalism = good; a website that bullshits about numbers of staff or lies about clients = bad.

You want to be the market leader?  
Then act like the market leader.

In my early 20s I walked into a new job. The role was junior but I liked the company and figured (rightly) it was a good place to grow. So I took the job. The guy that hired me reminded me I was going to be the lowest paid member of staff there and I would not get a pay-rise for a while. I took the risk and walked into the job as the lowest paid, newest recruit. But I didn't act like that. I wore a tie every day\*, I took the initiative and generated board papers, came up with ideas without being asked. I think everyone thought I was more important than I was meant to be. Within five months I was promoted and within five years I was a director of the company and earning six times my entry salary.

Sure I had some ups and downs along the way but I was successful because of the attitude I had on day one; and that attitude influenced perception.

So act the part. Or at least act the part you want to play.

## 8

### Soaking it up

When you are setting up your own business, you need to be a sponge.

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\*And I haven't worn a tie since I took the *Leap!*

Your ideas and your values are a direct result of what you see and experience, what inspires and stimulates you. And so you have to feed your brain, give it material to soak up.

There's so much material out there to consume, sometimes it's difficult to know where to start. Do loads of research on your target market, read other people's stories on business. Keep a cuttings file on entrepreneurs and start-ups, check out relevant TV and radio shows, search online.

And don't stop.

Books. Blogs. Websites. Newspapers. Magazines. Go out of your comfort zone. Pick up a magazine or read a paper you'd never normally look at. For instance, read *The Financial Times*, the *New Scientist* or *Marketing Week*.

Scribble all over it, make notes, have thoughts.

It will take you in directions you hadn't even thought of, open your eyes to new possibilities and new ways of doing things.

You have to be open to different voices and views; don't just stick with what you know, stick your neck out and soak up that stuff you didn't know.

You'll find it triggers results.

## 9

## Warning: steep incline ahead

I've just written a report on an industry I didn't know much about. I had a quick turnaround on it. Two days to produce it. I knew very little about the subject before I started. Now I know a lot. The client commissioned me because he wanted my clarity and insight, skills that he saw as transferable whatever the subject matter.

I sweated. I engrossed myself in the subject matter. I shut myself away for two days, started early and worked late. I sat at my desk doing research, then lay on the floor and made scribbles on paper. I lived and breathed another industry. Now I know lots (not everything); but I knew enough to write a damn good report. Just think what I could have done with four days or ten days.

It was a stimulating journey – a finite project with a beginning and an end. And now it's gone. It was quick and I had no choice but to fast-track my learning. Five or ten years ago it might have taken one or two weeks to produce a report but we are now in an environment where things have to happen far more quickly than that. And you have to venture outside your comfort zone and stretch yourself in a whole load of directions.

'I don't know anything about that' is just not a valid response any more. With the Internet you can do deep and rich research on most subjects and strike relationships with experts and commentators. Ignorance is not an option.

If you are prepared to venture into new areas you'll also find it a great platform for coming up with new ideas. Immersing yourself in a new area will be both daunting and stimulating, but it'll find you new ways of doing and thinking.

If your client is interested in opportunities in China, if the future of your business is in a new technology, there are no excuses. Your ability to learn and grow knows no boundaries other than TIME and INTENT.

OK, time is always a tough one, so just make sure you have the intent.

10

Get involved and get  
visible

If you're passionate about a new professional direction, don't hesitate to roll your sleeves up and get stuck in.

Katie has worked in HR for big companies in the City. She's taking a career break before embarking on a new direction; she wants to set up an art gallery. So she's got involved in a local art exhibition, helping out with marketing, sponsorship and organization. She's finding out everything about putting on an

art show and gaining really valuable experience. It's a voluntary role, but by the end of the project she'll be an expert.

And a valuable lesson: *Go for it.*

Whatever 'it' is – your goal, ambition, aspiration, dream – start doing 'it' and, if you can, do it young. Whether student radio, school enterprise project, film extra – get involved and prove your talents.

While everyone else is hanging around the college common room or watching TV, you are actually taking that first early step on to the career ladder. And it's never too early to start.

When I started doing work experience at a radio station, I did everything I could. I presented a show, did the gig guide for another, did some technical operation on some shows, drove the outside broadcast vehicle (a lot of which I must admit I didn't do that well, especially the driving). But I was visible. So I got offered proper paid work by other producers and other shows. The presenter of the movie programme was away. Could I stand in for him? More opportunities flowed. Because I was doing so much I was perceived as that good safe pair of hands. I was visible and I was available.

Then, when I got to university I wanted to get some marketing experience, so I stood for and was elected as Publicity Officer for the student union. I sat on every student committee, I presented shows on the campus radio station, I DJ'd at the college disco – I was pretty visible. I admit that I had an ego, but you have to have an ego to succeed.

Just make sure everyone knows you for the right reasons, so be careful what you put about yourself on Facebook.

## 1 1

# Don't listen to anyone who says 'no' to your ambition

Whatever your age or experience, if you have an idea, a goal or a dream – take the courage to *Leap!* regardless of what anyone else says.

It's fine to take advice from friends, family and mentors. Reshape and shift your proposition if there's good reason to, use feedback to fine tune your ideas – but stick to your guns, don't let anyone persuade you not to do it at all. Ambition takes self-determination to succeed, so don't be swayed.

When I was in my final year at school I told my headmaster I wanted to study media at university and planned to pursue a career in broadcasting. Sitting in his office the headmaster suggested that was an impractical goal and brought out a prospectus on a course in company secretaryship and said, 'Here, you should do this course instead.'

To this day I have no idea why he did that, it seemed an odd piece of advice. But I ignored him anyway.

- ! Six months later I was presenting the gig guide on local radio.
- ! Twelve months later I was presenting a show on local radio.
- ! Ten years later I was asked to return to the school to advise students on careers in the media.

Part of me felt like not supporting the school that had failed to support my own ambition, but a bigger part of me realized the students probably needed all the help they could get.

My booth had the biggest queues.

1 2  
**Be real!**

Be ambitious, yes. But be realistic.

I've met with people just starting out who talk of over-ambitious goals – turnover you know they cannot generate, crazy rates of growth, an over-inflated plan for acquisition and development. Knowing your limits is key. I have always taken an 'honest' approach to business: knowing when to say this project is too big for us, when to say we cannot deliver something. This pragma-

tism helps drive the business in the right direction and protects your risk.

Ambition and goal-setting are key to success but don't have false expectations about what is possible. Be realistic about what you can and can't do.

My own goals in life have always been realistic. Some quite simple: to be someone. To create something.

Others more specific: to work in radio; to work in TV; to work in the music industry; to recruit and manage my own team; to become an MD of a small business; to start my own business; to be a father; to write a book.

So set some targets of your own and make them realistic. For example:

- !** Who are your target clients?
- !** What are your target projects?
- !** What is your target turnover?
- !** What is your target profit?

Write down your goals and at the end of the year sit back and write down your achievements. Not just the obvious financial ones but also your achievements in personal development, the skills and experience you gained, the bits that counted for you.

Don't overcomplicate it, but goal-setting is an important way to set and track your achievements.

That's why they are called targets.

## 13 Follow your gut feeling

Go with your gut feeling.

You may want to consult others before embarking on a new strategy or direction, but always trust your instinct.

It's like when you ask a friend about a dilemma or decision, 'Should I?' or 'Shouldn't I?' when deep down, you *truly* know what to do before you even ask the question. Or when you have that moment of clarity on the tube or in the middle of the night. When you come up with that magic figure for your budget proposal. Getting the right answer is not always a science.

Instinct is such a valuable and underrated tool in the entrepreneur's toolkit. You don't need advisers and mentors for every decision. Because – and especially for the big ones – you'll know instinctively whether to take that risk on a project, invest in that new piece of software or take that managing director for lunch.

Just as you instinctively knew whether to take the *Leap!* in the first place. So, when you are struggling with decisions, remember your emotional response when you first had the dilemma. Nine times out of ten your final decision will reflect whatever you first felt, regardless of the analysis, evaluation and consulting you might have in between.

So why not save time – take a risk and trust your instinct. It's one of your most valuable tools, so use it.

## 14

### Leverage what you've learnt

Before you *Leap!* from your proper job, remember to take all the lessons you have learnt with you. Exploit every bit of your experience.

Because your job working for someone else will help you when working for yourself. Years being an employee can help the 'How not to' as much as the 'How to'. So build up contacts and experiences. See what works, note what doesn't work. Use the workplace experience to learn all you can on budgeting, people

management, project delivery, client care. You would probably be surprised by what you've learnt in your career.

People who have always worked for themselves are still capable of great success, but I would advocate a mixed bag of a few years' solid work experience before you take the *Leap!*. It's a great classroom and also a great reference point.

After all, if you never experienced first hand the tedium of working for someone else, how can you appreciate the freedom of working for yourself?

Working for someone else can limit your potential. You may be hungry to move on, to take on more responsibility but be denied the opportunity. When you go it alone, you're forever promoting yourself, stretching your skills in a whole load of directions, doing things you've always wanted to do, and also doing some things you never dreamed of doing.

# 15

## Get out of the classroom

Some business success stories attribute their achievements to what they learnt at business school. I'm not a fan of business schools and MBAs because I don't believe you can learn much in a classroom; you can only really learn on the job. I was

with two clients this morning. They are a two-person business. They debated about sending one of the partners on a training course but instead she jumped in at the deep end. She says she's learnt so much more actually doing the job than going on a training course and learning the theory.

Ten years ago I went on a management course, but there's little I can remember from it. What I have done in my job, on the other hand, is so memorable, what I did right and what I did wrong.

After all, the new business stars of today never went to business school. We've heard of the rap stars who learnt their business skills on the streets of New York, buying and selling to mates who have now extended their brands into record labels, clothing ranges, even vodka. One such rap star's business turnover was \$90 million in year one.

No formal training. No grand plan. No rules. Just learning the basics and going for it.

So here's to the grass-roots entrepreneur, it's the best place to start. Never assume you have to go to business school or university to be successful.

You just need to have the right attitude.

## 16

## Knock down the barriers

In a world of business with no rules, you have to cast your inhibitions aside and just get on with it. A friend of mine always wanted to be a writer. Not any kind of writing – she wanted to write erotica. But she had a serious job in finance and had never tried writing. Lots of people around her said, ‘You can’t be a writer because that’s not what you do.’ But who says? Why not?

So, she picked herself a pseudonym, got herself a hotmail address, and started writing and sending stories off to magazines and books. She told the magazines she was a writer. Not a wannabe writer, not an aspiring writer, but *a writer*. And editors liked her work. And they published her. Since she could hide behind the pseudonym, she had no inhibitions about claiming who or what she was and that gave her the confidence to do what she wanted. She said she was a writer and displayed such confidence that she got published.

Of course if she had written to them saying, ‘I’m not a writer but have tried my hand at a few stories – would you have a look at them?’ she would have got a very different response. A rejection, no doubt.

Break down the barriers, lose the inhibitions and you’ll be more successful.

## 17

## A focal point

As an adviser to start-ups and new businesses, I have never changed my mantra:

'Focus, Focus, Focus.'\*

And I try to adhere to it myself. Namely:

- ! Focus on what you are good at.
- ! Focus on one area at a time.
- ! Focus on results.
- ! Focus on building revenues.
- ! Focus on building a profitable business.

Too many companies get too ambitious, too quick. Having ten great ideas is all well and good but you might need to put a few on the back burner to make sure you can concentrate on delivery of at least one. And you can rarely invoice for an idea alone; you usually invoice for the *delivery* of an idea.

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\* And you'll find 47 mentions of focus in this book (make that 48) as evidence.

So focus on your core competence and get a reputation for *one* thing. And stay focused on what you can do to directly contribute to your bottom line – how's that for motivation?

It's easy to get sidetracked, diverted to another area if you get bored with the first. But keep your eye on the goal and don't take it away until you've reached it.

# 18

## Why failure's OK

I read an interview with a well-known entrepreneur the other day that said that the word 'failure' is not in his vocabulary.

But there's nothing wrong with a project or venture failing; I've had my fair share of failures. The experience it gives you in running a new project or venture will be really valuable.

An idea that gets fulfilled but ultimately fails is better than an idea that stays in a notepad or on a to-do list.

Sometimes you'll have bad news on a pitch or a deal will fall flat and you have to keep optimistic, salvage something positive from a heap of mess.

Stand back from it, count to ten.

I lost a pitch but went back to the client with an upbeat message, saying I was sorry not to have won it but that I still had some ideas to contribute. He thanked me for my positive reaction to bad news and asked me to stay in touch, with the potential for more work later.

Another time I had a problem with some suppliers who'd let me down. I picked the phone up straight away and let them know I was pissed off. And then I counted to ten. Or a hundred and ten more like. I explained in a dispassionate way what they had done wrong. The result? They apologized and did their utmost to keep me happy.

The problems caused me a lot of (unnecessary) grief, but by staying calm and standing back, it didn't get out of hand.

So try to be constructive when projects or relationships fail, because you can build better business as a result.

And if you mess up on a project or with a client, that's fine. Say so.

'I f\*\*\*ed up.'

And move on.

## 19

## You'd better believe it ...

When I started out in management I bored colleagues by saying, 'I could have managed a biscuit factory.' I never did get involved in biscuit production but it was a belief I have always held that I can be successful at most things and my management and business skills are transferable across a range of industries.

You may think that sounds like arrogance but it's actually self-belief. Believing in your own abilities is a powerful force and you've got to have that belief, that self-confidence, otherwise you'll really struggle. Launching a new business and then questioning your abilities to progress it can be a very destructive cycle. You *have* to believe it has success potential.

An ex-client of mine is a successful counsellor. But he's only done that for two years. His background is in property and retail. I asked him why he became a counsellor. One reason was to prove to himself that he could do anything he wanted and he's proved it to be true; he can turn his hand to most things. And some people are good at that; others are only good in their single sphere of expertise – take them out of their comfort zone and they'll sink.

The Icelandic entrepreneur Magnus Scheving started out as a builder and carpenter and was a motivational speaker at the

weekends (how's that for a combination?). When he was in his early 20s he made a bet with a friend that anyone could succeed at anything they wanted; his friend bet him to master aerobics and he became an aerobics champion. He then went on to bring all that experience together to launch a children's TV show, book and musical. There is a man with self-belief. If you get enough people to have faith in a goal, it will happen.

When you are developing a project or an idea, you have to believe it will happen. If you don't, you risk it not coming off. Visualizing that end goal, seeing how the end product will be consumed is a powerful force in thinking positively.

Self-doubt, on the other hand, will not deliver success. Let's face it, you will have days when your confidence is not at its best – but a confident and positive outlook will breed success.

Just be sure to manage your own expectations. I was pitching for a big assignment and decided to take a very positive approach to the process; I was extremely confident that I would get the project. So much so that, as I was waiting in the client's reception *before* I went in to the meeting, I scribbled on my notepad, 'I've got it'. As a result, I came across very well in the client meeting and they liked my confident and positive approach.

Unfortunately they saw someone even better than me later that week and he got the gig. I didn't win the project. It was a big blow.

So self-belief is important; always have a confident and positive approach, but if you big yourself up to win a project, just remember it's a long way to fall if you don't pull it off.

## 20

### From city trader to sole trader

I am sitting in a café in the heart of the 'City', London's financial centre where rules abound in both business and working practices. Parameters to what you do and how you do it. Although it has changed there are still rules as to what you wear, of what hours you work, of what your status is. This is anathema to the *scrambled up world of work*; it's a world of conforming to expectations, of doing the predictable.

When I started working in television in the late 1980s, I used to catch the train with old school friends who were on their way to their jobs in the City. 'Not working today?' they'd ask. Because they didn't get it – in their world a guy going somewhere in jeans could not have been going to work. And – thank goodness – most of that has changed.

In the City, in banks and financial institutions, there is undoubtedly a lot of talent. Workers are supplying their intellectual capital to employers, but strip away the corporate layers and how enterprising are the constituent parts? Or are their talents about being part of a team with a corporate infrastructure; is their power about being part of that critical mass?

Stick them in Prêt A Manger with a phone and a laptop and how would they fare, not as city traders but as sole traders? Who would thrive and who would struggle?

Because taking the *Leap!* is all about uncovering the entrepreneur within. And some will find that easier than others:

‘Some people will find it a challenge to leave an established work environment where they have busy colleagues and a support infrastructure around them, and walk into a quiet, empty, serviced office somewhere with nothing but a phone, a laptop, a desk and a bunch of good ideas. You have to start building something from scratch; moving from the buy side to the sell side is a shock for many people and it can be very lonely at the start. Equally you might have the best business plan in the world but you still have to have that passion, energy and desire to make it work.’

**Adam Bennett, co-founder of Hatstand who quit the City for life as an entrepreneur.**

## 21

## Conformity sucks

A good friend of mine got stuck in a rut at her old company. She worked in a culture where she was convinced that loyalty and success was measured by wearing a suit, turning up to work early, not taking a lunch break, leaving late. That was what her boss did and if you wanted to conform, that's what you had to do. She worked in an oppressive office environment, with poor natural light and desks crammed into too small a space. She didn't even like wearing a suit.

In her job, accountability and measuring performance weren't about productivity or how many ideas you had; it was about being heard and seen, the perception being that if you arrived early and left late then you must have been doing something right.

The day she walked away from that job, she felt liberated. She had no idea what she was going to do next but she felt she could start listening to her heart. You've got to feel comfortable in your skin, confident that your work reflects at least some of your personality. If not, change it. If you don't like wearing a suit to work, don't wear one. If your employer doesn't like it, maybe it's time to change your employer. What's the point of compromising who you are? Why conform for the sake of it?

Say bollocks to conformity. Listen to your heart, shed the shackles of corporate life and take a liberating *Leap!* away to the *scrambled up world*.

## 22

### Why catalysts count

Unless you have some grand plan from an early age – that you were always going to start a business – inevitably there's going to be a catalyst for taking the *Leap!*. Maybe you are sick of your current job, unhappy in your life, stuck in a rut? You may be fed up working hard for someone else for minimal reward and feel you can achieve more on your own.

Certainly more and more people are taking the *Leap!* and a big driver is dissatisfaction:

- ! Dissatisfaction with working for someone else, where you have to abide by rules you don't like.
- ! Dissatisfaction when you hit a glass ceiling and feel your ambition is limited by your employer.
- ! Dissatisfaction with the opportunities in the job market being too limited and inflexible.

- ! Dissatisfaction with the status quo and a feeling that you just want to do something different.
- ! Dissatisfaction with the fact that you can't dictate new working practices when you become a parent.

Or you may have some 'lifestyle' reasons:

- ! You're unhappy in life and want or need a change.
- ! Your job is making you stressed or you're feeling ill.
- ! You want to restore a better work/life balance.
- ! You have become a parent.
- ! You just want to be in control.
- ! You don't want to spend hours a day commuting to your workplace.

Sometimes you might be forced to take the *Leap!*. Redundancy can be a catalyst for trying new career routes with the safety net of your redundancy pay to support you trying new things. Redundancy may force you to think, 'What do I do next?' And, of course, you may not have an answer, but you have to do *something*, and you don't have much time to make a decision. So redundancy can be your biggest break.

Or, you may have more of a proactive reason: you have this fantastic idea, a goal or a yearning to build a new business, something you've been aching to do for years or just an idea you

had on the tube. Some take the *Leap!* in their 30s or 40s when they have become disillusioned with their jobs; others when they are younger because it is much lower-risk quitting your job when you don't have all that financial responsibility like kids and mortgages to worry about.

Me? I had a mix of motives:

! Ultimately the job was making me unhappy. I was over-stressed with too much on my plate. I'd become a victim of my own success: I was given new projects and ventures to run but only if I retained the old ones where I'd been successful. The company didn't want to risk losing my strengths in one area for me to try a new one.

! Plus, I was doing the double-whammy: working too hard and playing too hard – I was going to burn myself out. I felt unwell.

! I knew I needed a change.

Catalysts are important. If I hadn't got stressed, felt ill or got fed up then I would never have pressed the pause button and stood back. If I had just fast-forwarded through corporate life, I might never have made the change (hey, I might still be in my old job now ...).

At the time I could not rationalize or articulate it so clearly. It was more urgent than that. It was that I needed to do *something*. I needed to make a *change*. And *quick*. And that conviction is all you need to take the *Leap!*

You might just have an inkling or a feeling. That's all it takes. So once you've worked out you want to change, don't hang around too long to *Leap!*. Because it'll make you an unhappy and unproductive worker. The sooner you liberate yourself, the sooner you can release all that positive energy and start afresh.

## 23 It's a risky business

Why don't people *Leap*?

Three reasons:

- 1** Risk,
- 2** Risk, and
- 3** Risk.

Ask anyone what's stopping them taking the *Leap!* and, apart from a lack of self-belief, not wanting to take the risk is the reason most people give. They have kids, they have mortgages and they are frightened of losing financial stability.

And they are right about that – this is risky business. Ask yourself this:

What's the worst thing that can happen? It all fails and you have to go back and get a proper job. But at least you *tried*.

If you've been in your proper job for a long time, your resistance to change will be greater. You may have become institutionalized to the culture of your old organization, and the idea of leaving not just your job, but your office and all that represents may be extremely frightening.

Because an office is more than a business; it's a culture and a rich network of social and professional relationships; of support and dependency – it's a safety net. If you strip those layers away it can be scary.

People also stay in jobs longer if they like their co-workers. That may seem an odd reason not to take the *Leap!* but if your colleagues are like family, breaking up that social unit is not going to be a priority.

If you're risk averse then this isn't for you. But accept from the outset that there will be highs and lows. You have to be a glass half-full kind of person, because a half-empty approach will get you nowhere.

In the old economy you were a cog, neatly segmented into a role in an organizational structure. Now it's different – you can survive without all that structure and comfort, and achieve so much more. *If* you are prepared to take a risk.

But, of course, it might get uncomfortable.

# 24

## 'Easy'??!

For one naïve moment in 2000 I thought business would be easier now I had taken the *Leap!* I thought it would be 'easier' not having a proper job, without any boss or board to answer to.

I started to earn more money, work fewer days and enjoy less responsibility. But that was just the beginning.

Beyond that first year it was anything but easy. It was very hard work. Much tougher than a proper job where you have a guarantee of a pay packet at the end of the month. It was not a case of taking the easy way out, rather the hard way out.

I met a former colleague the other day and told him I was writing a book about quitting 'the 9-5'. 'But you haven't *quit* the 9-5,' he said, 'you've gone 24/7.' And he's right. It's not about quitting corporate life for something easier; it's about a new way of working. And in the *scrambled up world of work* there are zero guarantees of success.

So I offer you three words:

Go for it.

Oh, and three more:

And good luck.

## 25

## Go for it ...

If you want to do something new, to take that *Leap!* from the confines of your corporate life to start afresh, to relocate, or to follow your dreams; if you have even a 35% inkling that you should do it, then *do it*. Because you're unlikely to ever get a 100% affirmation.

So take your *Leap!* and set up that property company, yoga centre, management consultancy.

Everything involves risk.

You'll always find reasons *not* to do it. The longer you leave it, the greater the chance that you'll get stuck in a rut and never have the courage to *Leap!*

I know people who have stayed in jobs ten years and always *meant* to leave. And they're still unhappy, still dreaming of 'what if?' and wondering what life is like on the other side, wishing they'd gone for it.

Sometimes you need a catalyst or that defining moment when you say 'bollocks to the status quo' and you take that *Leap!* into the unknown.

So say it now.

