

## **Why am I writing this book?**

There's an old biking adage which says there are two types of riders in this world: those that have laid them down (wiped out), and those that will. The possibility of wiping out is a fact of life and something we – as successful entrepreneurs and bikers -- readily accept. Wish I had a dollar for each time someone who, upon hearing that I'm a biker, told me of the wipeout that caused him to never get back on the bike. He then looks at me with eyes that plead for understanding that, in my case, never comes...because I *don't* understand that approach. I merely chuckle, shake my head and walk away.

This somewhat cold response doesn't come from denial or not wanting to hear about others' troubles. Indeed, we never think that a similar "wipeout" or misfortune will happen to us; but when it does - notice I didn't say if - our mettle as a rider is truly tested and we come face to face with the ultimate decision: do I get back on the bike or not? My experience has shown that as both a long term biker and successful entrepreneur, the way in which you face that moment of truth affects not only your ability to ride -- but your walk through business and life as well. For me, how you handle this decision speaks to your passion and whether or not you're "all in", as my poker playing friends would say.

I say this from experience, having had my own share of severe wipe outs -- on all three fronts. In each case, I too faced that moment where I questioned whether or not to get back up and onto the 'bike'. And each time, I elected to do so -- believing that wipeouts are part of life's tuition and, as such, we waste an all-important lesson if we refuse to learn from these misadventures and continue along on our journey.

On the pages that follow are the lessons I learned when it was time for me to “get back on the bike” and continue to build the type of business and life I dreamed of when I was starting out. To be sure, there are some who simply don’t belong on the ride and as such, this book isn’t for them. This book is instead for those of us who understand that success is more choice than chance; and who want to know and understand not only why we lay it down, but how to get back up -- and excel when doing so.

Walk into any book store and you’ll find books written on how to run your company more successfully; and across the store are just as many on how to live your life more fully. (I know, I’ve read most of them) What makes this book different is my fundamental belief that at the highest level there’s little to no separation between our lives and the businesses we’ve built; that for an entrepreneur to be successful, both components must be dealt with together. They are two sides of the same coin, and it’s time we stop apologizing for it.

For entrepreneurs, business and life come together to form one long road trip -- with many exits along the way. Each exit has its own siren’s song and glittering road signs filled with promises of fulfillment and excitement. *The Biker’s Guide to Business* is written to help you navigate this road; not only to figure out which direction to take, but to discover which exits will allow you to enjoy yourself while achieving success.

Success no longer has to be a total trade off meaning between your personal and professional lives; your relationships and interests don’t have to suffer in order for your business to grow. Nor do you have to wait for the inevitable wipeout to learn the lessons that will allow you to ascertain your true vision of success. You *can* have it both ways; but only if you understand a few fundamental techniques that are easily mastered and

implemented.

Just like the lessons and methods taught at riding school -- meant to ensure a life of safe biking habits -- the tools, tips and insights that fill the following pages have helped me -- and the hundreds of successful entrepreneurs with whom I've worked -- excel. The motorcycle as metaphor is not simply a clichéd reference to risk and bravado; it's a vehicle that teaches us about mastering straightforward techniques that will keep you upright and turn your ride into one where you achieve success in *both* business and life.

*The Biker's Guide to Business* is also written to serve as an alternative to the hundreds of business books out there based solely on theory and observation. As a voracious reader of these kinds of books, I'm too often subjected to the writer's passive opinions based on what they've observed rather than their actual experience of having *accomplished* something. Though well meaning, their hindsight and armchair quarterbacking is all gained from the sidelines. While there's some value in these recitals, I along with many others yearn for the true story; to feel their pain, taste their fear and understand with clarity how they overcame these obstacles

Many an author has made their mark by simply regurgitating on paper what they've seen from afar, and I'm damned tired of it. The entrepreneurs with whom I work and hang out want to hear from someone whose tail is on the line day after day, facing issues that fly by them at the speed of life. We want to hear from someone who's laid it down in a big way, and see how they reacted. *So, if you're looking for a run of the mill business book based on theory and observation -- this ain't it.*

Yes, there are also those books written by successful, former entrepreneurs which

are extremely valuable. The principal issue I have with these romantic recollections from those who “made it” is not with the validity of their story; on the contrary, there’s true value in their words. However, the passage of time often causes them to forget or to gloss over many of the little things that are crucial to helping someone overcome similar issues and find success in today’s fast-paced business world. Rarely do we find a book with stories and lessons from the ‘front lines’ of the business world. As such, we are forced to spend valuable time digesting and testing these theories or recollections in our real world as we push forward. And the reason we’re at the mercy of these casual business observers and romantic recollections is because most entrepreneurs are usually too damned busy *being* entrepreneurs to take the time to write about it in real time.

When the rubber meets the road, we want and need real, in-the-saddle experience that can be used NOW. We desperately require lessons from people and companies just like us as we move forward. Therefore -- with all due respect to Jack Welch (for I am a true fan), along with the thousands of other writers who have penned their stories -- what works in a behemoth like GE doesn’t necessarily transfer into a company of 10, 20 or 100 people. *The Biker’s Guide to Business* is specifically for entrepreneurs; and my overarching goal is to let you know that you’re not alone in your day to day struggles. There are tons of others out there just like you who have not only survived, but who are *still* in the saddle riding that dream for all its worth.

I consider myself to be a typical entrepreneur; I started my business 15 years ago, survived the early stages, fought through the middle years and am now looking to maintain that ever-elusive state of high performance in order to profit from all of the fear, heartache and sweat it took to get here. On the pages that follow are the lessons gleaned

over these 15 years – lessons that come from my own experience, as well as those of the companies I work with every day. Some are raw, straightforward, and intensely personal; but in the end, each and every one proves that business is business, and every situation shares certain similarities.

But, you might ask: how -- if still fully engaged in this great ride of business and life -- am I taking the time to write about it? The first answer is-- painfully -- because both the demands of my consulting business as well as the writing of this book are full time jobs. But what makes it doable at this time is the extensive catalog of experiences I have, and the stage of business and life in which I find myself. I need no further research; for I've either already lived it or am in the middle of it. I need few interviews, because for years I've worked along side the people whose stories fill the pages.

I'm also writing this book to honor all of my clients, mentors and business associates who have insisted that I share the trials and successes we've experienced and shared over the course of my career. They've told me that if they had the benefit of one tenth of the insight I am now able to share early on in their careers, they'd have reached their goals faster and achieved more over the course of their professional lives.

Therefore, it's my sincere hope that the stories and methods that follow will help you arrive where you want to go safely and successfully; because life is a fast moving highway that should be ridden with gusto!