
DEBBIE KING

LOVING
YOUR
BUSINESS

RETHINK YOUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH YOUR COMPANY
and MAKE IT WORK *for* YOU



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LOVING YOUR BUSINESS

Rethink Your Relationship with Your Company and Make it Work for You

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ADVANCE PRAISE

*Want to know how to grow your business and keep your sanity? Read this book. *Loving Your Business* is packed with tools for creating more clarity, freedom, and money in your business. With simple and clear steps, Debbie King explains how to rethink your business and enjoy the journey along the way.*

—BROOKE NEBLETT, CEO AND FOUNDER OF FEDERAL HILL CONSULTING LLC AND FYI - FOR YOUR INFORMATION, INC.

Loving Your Business is a unique and powerful book. Read it and learn why loving your business is the fastest way to grow it. Debbie King explains how to scale your business so that it is worth far more than just the revenue it generates. When you do this, you win and so does everyone else because you're adding more value to the world. Then it's even easier to love your business, because it gives you the time, money, and freedom you always wanted.

—ATI OKELO WILLIAMS, OWNER, HONEYCOMB RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION, ANGEL INVESTOR, HOST OF HGTV SHOW *DC FLIPPERS*

*Once entrepreneurs make the jump, start a business, and—as we learn in the classic, *The E-Myth*—work on the business and not in the business, what next? How do we build and scale (and sell) our business? How do we avoid critical mistakes? Debbie King masterfully reveals these answers in *Loving Your Business*. The clincher? She tells us how to achieve these goals without going completely nuts. Successful founders hating their businesses is the “dirty little secret” of the entrepreneurship world. Debbie tackles this mountain step by step, and takes us along beside her, with key questions, gut checks, and simple to-dos. This is now required reading for my entrepreneurship students of all ages and success levels. We can spot that type-A early. There is a point where this super-drive works against us, leaving us wondering, “How did I get here?” Debbie brings us down to ground level in just a few hours. If you want a crystal ball to your future, which includes entrepreneurial success and happiness, this is your book.*

—KATHY KORMAN FREY, FOUNDER & CEO, HOT MOMMAS PROJECT, ENTREPRENEUR IN RESIDENCE, WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP PROF., THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

*In *Loving Your Business*, Debbie King inspires, challenges, and allows for no excuses. The tools and insights—especially the “Model”—have completely changed how I see the world around me. Every business owner can learn how to use it to get results fast. Her six-step process makes so much sense. Why haven’t I heard it before? *Loving Your Business* is the fastest way to freedom as a business owner.*

—PAMELA MAASS, ATTORNEY AND OWNER OF MAASS LAW

*Debbie King knows firsthand what it's like to rethink your relationship with your company. Watching her transform her own business and reclaim her life was an inspiration. What if we spent as much time learning to manage our minds as we do managing our business and our money? **Loving Your Business** is not just a book about mindset. It's also a practical guide to increase the value of your business and feel confident and secure as you scale.*

—COREEN HARNEY, CEO AND CO-FOUNDER OMNITECH SERVICES

Debbie King has had a tremendously positive impact on me as a coach, and she dramatically shifted the course of my business. As a health professional who deals with patients recovering from trauma, I resonate with her focus on shifting to the rational part of the brain for decision-making. We are so often blind to how our brains may be working against us. I highly recommend this book for any entrepreneur seeking answers on how to move to a “thrive” mentality. Such a great resource.

—LISA KLEIN, PT, IMT.C, OWNER AND FOUNDER,
TOTAL HEALTH PHYSICAL THERAPY

With a voice full of compassion, Debbie King takes your hand and leads you on a journey of self-discovery. Why do so many entrepreneurs end up resenting their business? How does it happen that the business we loved so much in the beginning becomes such a source of stress and struggle? Debbie knows the reasons, and in this book, she offers a unique and powerful approach to recreate your relationship with your business, and create a life you love.

—MARSHA RALLS, FOUNDER AND CEO, THE PHOENIX
WELLNESS RETREAT, UNITED NATIONS AMBASSADOR
FOR WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP DAY

*Debbie King offers a revolutionary approach to growing your business. In *Loving Your Business*, she shatters the myth that to scale your company you have to work harder, work longer, and put the rest of your life on hold. You'll learn a new model for creating reality, which allows you to intentionally create results you want in your business and your life. This book is full of hard-won insights and practical solutions for scaling your business and managing your mind. No matter where you are in your business, you'll benefit from reading this book.*

—RHIANNON ANDERSEN, OWNER AND
CMO, STEELHEAD PRODUCTIONS

*In *Loving Your Business*, Debbie King explains why investing in your business is the best investment you can make. Get your highlighters out. This will be a book you turn to again and again as you use your mind to transform your relationship with your business. The best thing about falling in love with your business again is that when you love it, everyone else will too. When your business is an asset, instead of a job, it works for you. This is a powerful book that is about much more than growing your business. It's about creating a life you love.*

—JENNI MCKENNA, CEO AND FOUNDER,
MCKENNA PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Debbie King is masterful in her way of connecting, guiding, and inspiring her CEO/Founder readers to rework their relationship with their business. Rather than letting our companies run us, she shows us how to shift the way we relate to and nurture this incredible asset. As an entrepreneur, author, and mental health expert, I am impressed with how Debbie weaves together her own stories as a successful entrepreneur with the specifics of building, scaling, and valuing our business and connects it all to the field of human potential.

—JULIE LOPEZ, PHD, CEO, VIVA PARTNERSHIP,
LLC, AUTHOR OF *LIVE EMPOWERED*

INTRODUCTION

Driving down Route 66 in Washington, D.C., toward my office one April afternoon, a thought hit me like a rogue wave.

I hate my business.

I had poured fifteen of the best years of my life into my business. I was spending more than sixty hours a week running it. It was basically my identity.

And I couldn't stand it.

The sudden feelings of overwhelm and dread were so intense that my knuckles gripping the steering wheel turned white. Then came the second, bigger wave.

I'm not sure I like myself very much either.

That wave pulled me under.

I knew I hadn't been *happy*, exactly, for a long time. I hadn't had a good night of sleep in years; the dark circles under my eyes were now a permanent feature. I'd forgotten what the inside of a gym looked like. I'd gained weight and was eating and drinking too much. And I functioned in a constant state of low-level anxiety punctuated with occasional panic. When I walked through the office door, my heart would race, anticipating the problems waiting for me. All my relationships were strained to the breaking point because I was so tense and irritable.

For years, I assumed this was just part of the deal and went with the territory of being an entrepreneur. But as I sat in my car that day I realized it must not be this way for everyone. If all entrepreneurs were unhealthy, unhappy, resented their businesses, and felt bad about themselves, there wouldn't be so many of us.

Anyway, I hadn't always been miserable. I could still remember how exciting it felt to launch my technical consulting startup. I'd worked my way up from a room in my basement to a professional office filled with employees. Running my own business felt phenomenal in the beginning. I was doing *exactly* what I loved, *exactly* the way I wanted to do it.

I remember being challenged every day, more than I'd ever been challenged before. I learned hard lessons about cash flow and managing people. I grappled with pricing strategies and struggled with estimates. I discovered the importance of marketing and sales and shelled out money for laptops, software, and support services. But it felt fun and exhilarating, *because it was mine*.

As the business grew, the pace picked up, the complexity

increased, and the stakes were higher. On the outside everything looked great—the business was scaling and making money. But inside, I was feeling frustrated, overwhelmed, and exhausted. I started doubting myself.

Instead of leading a team creating state-of-the-art solutions, I was in react mode. Every day, my focus was on putting out fires. I didn't run my business; it ran me—and it ran me into the ground. I was “successful” on the outside but miserable on the inside. I worked all the time and the rest of my life crumbled around me.

That April afternoon, I asked myself, *Is the problem that I no longer believe in my company, or myself? Do I still believe in the vision, or am I ready to quit?* What I discovered was that deep down I did NOT want to quit, but I also wasn't willing to continue living THIS life.

There has to be a better way, I thought. I set out to find it.

* * *

Business owners have it made, right? We own our companies, we decide how much money we make, how we spend our time, and who we serve. We're masters of our schedules and our lives. We're living the dream and have ultimate freedom—

Record scratch.

If you're reading this book, you're rolling your eyes at that description. While the rest of the world may picture us as self-made millionaires freed from the shackles of the nine-to-five,

business owners know that the “freedom” of business ownership isn’t free at all.

You’re proud that you beat the statistics and made it past the five-year mark, where most businesses fail. But it can still feel like everything is on the line, every day. Your money, your identity, and your freedom. The business can take all your time and wreak havoc on the rest of your life. Sometimes, you feel completely out of balance. But it doesn’t have to be this way.

Burnout among us is common. When it happened to me, I was just...*done*.

We’re high achievers by nature. We’re wired to do whatever it takes to succeed. We don’t give up when confronted with obstacles; instead, we work harder. Our achiever characteristics help us succeed in business but also lead us to think there is constantly something else we *could* or *should* be doing. We’re plagued by the gnawing feeling that no matter how much we do, we’re not doing *enough* or doing it *right*.

And so, we pour ourselves into our companies. Being a successful business owner can become the core of our identity. Our self-worth can start to feel connected to the success of our business. When business is good, *we’re* good—and when there are problems, there’s something *wrong* with *us*.

When you believe your business is your identity, your brain literally feels like your survival is at stake. You’ll put everything into the business and have nothing left.

No wonder we don't make time for vacations, let alone self-care or relationships.

If you have a lifestyle or professional services business and you love it, then keep doing what you're doing. But if that was the case, you probably wouldn't be reading this book.

If instead, you're stressed, frustrated, and feeling trapped by your company, then you're right where I was when I was driving to work that day.

And this book is for you.

What if your business didn't feel like a ball and chain weighing you down every minute of every day? What if you *loved* your business again and rediscovered the feelings of excitement and freedom, and the sense of purpose you had when you first began your entrepreneurial journey? What if instead of working for your business, your business worked for you?

It's possible, and you can make it happen.

That's why I wrote this book. But it's not the only reason.

This book is also about what happens once you decide to turn your business into an asset, one that supports your life, not the other way around.

I used willpower and grit to grow my business, but hit a wall once the company exceeded \$1 million in revenue per year. The problem wasn't my business. The problem was my mindset. The

way I was thinking about myself, my team, my clients, and my services caused me to feel frustrated and overwhelmed. The belief that in order to succeed I had to control everything not only limited the company's growth, it left me exhausted.

I stayed stuck at that revenue level for almost a decade. I tried Rockefeller Habits, Scaling Up, EOS® But systems are just tools. If your mindset and strategy aren't aligned, the best system in the world won't get you the results you want.

No matter how many people I hired, podcasts I listened to, and workshops I attended, I just couldn't see how to grow the company without working more hours. It felt like my business was an adversary who "stole" my time and the best years of my life. The business was the perpetrator responsible for my misery. Looking back, no wonder I felt trapped, right? How can you simultaneously grow your business while resenting and trying to escape it? But I couldn't see it.

I felt *disconnected* from my business and paid a high price for it—damaged relationships, destructive habits, depleted health, and years of my life lost to unhappiness.

And oh, by the way, I never even thought about whether I was building a company that was an *asset that had intrinsic value on its own*.

Fortunately, you don't need a decade's worth of frustration to motivate you. If your business makes you feel stressed out and burned out; if you feel overwhelmed and frustrated; if you don't have time—or feel like you can't take time—for yourself or your

friends and family, and the people you love; if you try not to even *feel* your emotions because you think they'll slow you down even more; then it's not only time to change your business, it's time to change your life.

I learned the hard way that to get results in my business—and to create a life beyond my business—I needed to start with managing my own mind.

Like any good student, I went looking for help in books.

I didn't find much.

While there are some great books out there on the mechanics of running and growing a business, and even a few good ones on how to sell a business, those books couldn't reach me. They failed to address the main problem, which was how I was thinking about my business, and my *relationship* with my company.

I was trapped by my belief that to prove my worth as a person I had to succeed. This drove my relentless need to control everything. It also resulted in a business that *could not* run without me. Then I blamed the business for taking all my time and making me unhappy. Sounds crazy, right? But since I first started writing about this, I've worked with hundreds of business owners who feel this way.

To change my life, I had to understand how my thoughts and beliefs affected my actions and learn how to shift them to get results. I had to rethink my relationship with my business and make it work for me. Here's what I learned:

1. The relationship you have with your business consists of your thoughts and feelings about it. When you intentionally decide to love your business (and yourself), you'll stop running yourself into the ground trying to prove you can do everything. You'll recognize the business isn't a measure of your self-worth. Just like you can't hate yourself thin, you can't resent your business and grow it. Loving your business is a decision, and it's the first step to freedom.
2. Run your business like you plan to sell it (even if you don't think you want to). Treat it like an investment and turn it into an asset other people want to buy. The by-product of doing this is that you create a business that can scale and run without taking all your time. This is how you'll finally achieve the combination of freedom and security you really want. Take steps to increase the value of your business, and it will be worth more to you *and* to prospective buyers.

The advice in this book combines mindset with strategy—because both will lead you to the same result. When you choose to love your business, you actually will; and when you turn your company into an asset that runs without you, is a leader in a niche market, and generates recurring revenue from scalable solutions and products, your business will be *easy to love*. Once I changed my thinking and transformed my business, something unexpected happened. I no longer needed to escape it. If that sounds like music to your ears, keep reading.

* * *

Running a business is like being in a serious relationship. So

how's your relationship with your business these days? Are you in love, separated, or getting divorced? Are you committed, or "looking?"

In the beginning of a relationship, you can't stop thinking about the other person. You're *in love* after all, and everything is great. But over time, you start noticing little things you don't like. Maybe your partner leaves socks on the bathroom floor, forgets to clean the stove, or bites their nails when nervous.

Focusing on those bad habits makes it a lot harder to see all the good parts of the relationship. You may not notice how often they make you laugh, tell you you're amazing, or give you a warm hug. Your brain automatically filters what it pays attention to based on what it expects to see. The more you notice what you don't like, the more your brain selects those things to notice. The problem is we're usually unaware we're doing this. We think we are noticing *reality*. But in fact, as psychological research bears out again and again, we *create* reality.

The same goes for your relationship with your business. If you see it as something that devours your freedom, and leaves you trapped and frustrated, *it will be that way*.

Trust me, everyone *else* will start to see it that way, too. If you don't love your business, neither will your clients, your team, or the market.

Part I of this book will teach you how to manage your mind. You don't have to wait until everything is perfect in your business

to feel good about it. In fact, the sooner you start feeling good about it, the sooner your business will start working for you.

You'll learn how the primitive brain holds us back (by trying to keep us safe) and about the hidden instruction manual that filters our reality. You'll discover an entirely new model for creating any result you want in your business and in your life. This model always works, and best of all it's completely within your control.

When you use this model to improve your relationship with your business, everything will change. You'll learn that it's possible to have a successful business that gives you freedom and time (and plenty of money). Your frustration and overwhelm will diminish and can even disappear.

Part II of this book will teach you the strategy to increase the value of your business and turn it into an asset. You'll learn why investing in your business is the best investment you can make, because unlike the stock market or real estate, you have control over its value. Instead of having a glorified job, you'll learn how to create a business that can scale. One that works for you, instead of the other way around.

What most business owners don't realize is that we create a trap. Usually it's because of two fatal mistakes:

1. Running the business like a lifestyle company instead of investing in it like an asset.

I was guilty of this in so many ways. First, there was my expensive company car. Then, there were the exclusive business clubs

and upgraded hotel suites. And don't even get me started on the handbags and the shoes. As soon as my business was a success, instead of reinvesting the profit for growth, I took out a lot of the excess cash as legal distributions, which funded my lifestyle.

You work so hard, I told myself. You deserve to go to New Zealand. You deserve to ride horses on the beach and scuba dive. Treat yourself!

Don't get me wrong. I thoroughly enjoyed it! And there was some truth to the idea that I deserved it. Running my business took so much time and energy that spending money on some indulgences seemed like the *least* I could do for myself. But it was a short-term fix and left me completely unprepared for unexpected market fluctuations—like the financial crisis of 2008.

Here's the other downside: when you don't reinvest in your business, you miss the opportunity to build an asset that ultimately takes care of you. I'm not talking about just a day at the spa or a fancier pair of shoes. I mean a business that will take care of you financially *forever* and also leave you feeling energized, fulfilled, and truly free.

It may seem hard to give up some of those luxuries, but when I got serious about making my business work for me, something strange happened. I actually didn't *want* to spend the excess money. I became more interested in reinvesting profits, scaling our solutions, delegating, and measuring our progress. Growing the company became fun.

If you're not reinvesting most of your profits into the business

so it can grow, then I hate to break it to you. You might have some lifestyle adjustments coming your way.

That leads us directly to problem number two...

2. Being so personally involved in operations that the company can't run without you.

I get it. It's your business. That doesn't mean that you must own every...single...thing. It doesn't mean that you have to exert total control. Over everyone. It doesn't mean you must double-check everyone's work, personally handle all the sales, and make every decision.

Sure, it's your business, but its successes, failures, and growth have nothing to do with your worth as a person. If you make it mean that, then how you feel about *yourself* will swing wildly depending on how the business is doing at that moment. You'll run yourself to exhaustion trying to control everything, and over-managing everyone. Then your team will resent you for breathing down their necks and crushing their ingenuity.

Without meaning to, many of us build ourselves a glorified job with a thousand-item task list. Instead, we should be creating a well-managed company that can run without us. When you're in the thick of it, it's easy to lose sight of the difference. Successfully running a business isn't about personally completing every "to-do." If that were the case, why have a team at all? You'd be better off just being a solopreneur.

Before I learned this, I felt:

- **OVERWHELMED** by problems. It seemed like the whole business rested on my shoulders, and I was always putting out fires. Clients wanted my personal attention, and cash flow was a never-ending battle.
- **FRUSTRATED** by my team. I felt like I was the only one who cared about the business. I was constantly blindsided by surprises. We were always recreating the wheel, and everyone wanted more from me.
- **RESENTFUL** of my business. I was tired of pouring all of my money, time, and energy into it. I was sacrificing my relationships, health, and happiness, and *still* not getting the results I wanted.

In Part II, you'll learn how to transform your business into an asset that grows and runs so well without you that other people will want to buy it. I had to learn this the hard way, and now I'm on a mission to make sure other business owners don't have to. The surprising thing is that the steps that make your business easy to love are the same ones that make other people want to buy it. Right now, it may be hard to imagine selling your business, but there's never been a better time to turn your business into an asset that you *could* sell.

Because that's real freedom. Keep it or sell it—and win either way.

Remember the feeling of excitement and limitless possibility you had when you started? It can feel that way again, no matter what's going on with the economy. Once you start using the steps in this book, you'll feel clear, focused, and confident.

You'll learn how to stop making it all about you and work on

creating a healthy (and balanced) relationship with your business following this six-step process:

1. **Mindset:** Love your business, manage your mind.
2. **Focus:** Narrow your niche, add more value, differentiate yourself in the market.
3. **Strategy:** Turn services into solutions that scale, simplify systems.
4. **Money:** Generate recurring revenue, get paid in advance.
5. **Numbers:** Set written goals, know your numbers, monitor key metrics.
6. **Freedom:** Replace yourself, reduce dependencies, hire a sales team.

Then...

Part III gives you a preview of that time in your future when you're ready to think about an exit—even if you can't imagine it yet. Most of us don't think about positioning our business for a future sale when we start out, because we think we'll own it forever. Plus, our energy is tied up in getting it off the ground, and the last thing on our mind is an exit strategy. We're caught up in the daily demands, trying to balance everything with our personal life, growing the business, innovating, pivoting, and on and on. The need for an exit plan seems distant and sounds overwhelming. There's just no time.

Besides, secretly, you're not even sure your company is really valuable, because you know all the things wrong with it. Who would buy it? You may doubt it's even possible to sell and get enough money to make it worth it for you.

The best time to think about selling your business is when you start it. That way, as you build your business, every decision you make is filtered through the lens of whether you're increasing the value of your business and creating an asset. When you run your business like you're planning to sell it, your focus will be on creating a scalable and profitable company that will run successfully without you at the helm. That's a liberating thought!

If you don't already have an exit strategy in place, don't worry. The second-best time to come up with a plan is *right now*. Part III will show you how to think about positioning your company for a sale. When your business gives you the money, freedom, and time you always wanted, the most amazing thing happens: other people want to buy it! But you might just decide to keep it. Either way, you win.

Whether it's months or decades down the line, you'll be able to smoothly part ways with your company if you take the steps now to turn it into an asset that runs without you. You'll also be well-rewarded financially for your commitment. You'll be able to focus on the next stage in your life and create the future you want after you and your business have consciously uncoupled.

* * *

In these pages, you'll read tales of love, hate, despair, joy, fear, and

hope. These stories touch on almost every emotion—because, let's face it, when you build a business, it's an emotional journey. For the purposes of privacy, I've changed the names, but the stories are real.

There are the highs when the business first gets off the ground. Think back to when you landed your first client or hit your first financial goal. You were filled with elation, excitement, and the world was full of possibility, right? There's no better feeling in the world.

There are the lows when you hit obstacles and experience setbacks. Some of the systems you try fail. You don't meet your financial targets, and you worry about making payroll. Employees quit or start their own business and take your clients. Your personal life suffers because you're so focused on your business. You feel lonely.

There are the humdrum, middle-of-the road moments. You get caught in the tedium of emails, bills, proposals, day-to-day necessities. Your business doesn't seem *interesting* anymore.

It's inevitable that your relationship with your business will change over time. But you don't have to settle. Rekindle your excitement and sense of purpose. This book will teach you how to reclaim your life and recreate those feelings. You'll learn why you *must* fall in love with your business again, if you want to grow it. If you ever want to sell it, you must love it even more. For more resources, checklists, and videos on the topics covered in this book, be sure to check out LovingYourBusiness.com/resources/

When you rethink your relationship with your business, you'll reclaim your life. When you turn your business into an asset other people want to buy, you can keep it or sell it, and win either way. I know, because that's what happened for me. If you do what I'll teach in these pages, the same thing will happen for you.

In fact, loving your business is the best investment you can make. And it starts right now.