

CHAPTER TWO

THE SAFETY TRAP

SAFETY VS. HAPPINESS

First, let's understand the fundamental differences between the two emotional states of safety and happiness. If you were to dissect the colloquialism, "The joy is in the journey, not the destination," happiness is the journey; safety is the destination.

Safety refers to a state of being free from harm or danger. It is a primal instinct deeply rooted in our evolutionary history. The perception of safety triggers the brain's reward system, releasing neurochemicals like dopamine, contributing to a sense of well-being. If you have ever purchased a toy for a puppy, you have seen the instinct for safety over happiness in action. At first brush, most puppies are scared to engage with the unknown. To the puppy, the new toy may look fun, and they are most likely inquisitive. As their human, you know they will love playing with it; I mean, who wouldn't? It's a toy! The puppy's first reaction will most likely be to not engage with the new toy until they are able to form a better opinion. They will most likely keep a watchful

eye on the new toy but keep their distance. The puppy is choosing safety over happiness.

Happiness is a complex emotional state that encompasses feelings of joy, contentment, and overall life satisfaction.* Unlike safety, happiness is not solely linked to the absence of threats or danger; it is influenced by a myriad of internal and external factors, including social connections, personal accomplishments, and one's outlook on life. In the case of the puppy and the toy, if you have ever pressed on the "squeaker" in a doggie toy and then seen your best friend coming at you at 80 MPH, ready to play, you have witnessed happiness. Leading up to that moment of transformation from a puppy playing it safe to playing with reckless abandon, the puppy unconsciously traveled through a whole host of emotions influenced by their desire to play, investigate "questionable" circumstances, and trust they have built with their human. Ahh, the complexities of happiness.

"You can't buy happiness, but you can buy toys, and that's kind of the same thing."

-Anonymous

When building a business, making it big often means taking risks and facing challenges head-on. But here's the thing: some people aiming to become successful business owners get caught up in the idea that staying safe equals being happy. Exchanging or conflating safety for happiness can often hold you back when you're trying to build a booming business. Imagine a salesperson afraid to try new things, like

exploring untapped markets, pitching fresh ideas, or using the latest tech tools. Their goal might be to keep things safe and predictable, but the results are often missed chances, slow professional growth, and a business that hits a standstill.

Some business owners deeply feel that safety means happiness. Many factors contribute to the tendency to connect a sense of security with overall well-being, such as:

- **Financial and Business Stability:** - Business owners often associate financial security with safety, equating stability to overall happiness. Do you want to “pay your bills and live within your means,” or do you want to “have it all and live your dreams?”

- **Risk Aversion:** - Entrepreneurs are generally risk takers; that is what allows them to succeed, but playing it safe and developing a strong aversion to risks and uncertainties by avoiding potential threats to the business is a safeguard for some, and this avoidance is linked to feelings of happiness. To paraphrase T.S. Eliot, “Only those who risk are free.” Actually, the quote is, “Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go,” but you get the idea.

- **Success Metrics:** - Business achievements tied to safe measurements of success may lead people to believe these factors inherently contribute to their happiness. Do you want to “coast” and gently meet your goals, or do you want to “blow” them out of the water?

- **Community and Reputation:** - The reputation of a business within a community can be a source of pride and happiness for owners. Maintaining a safe and reputable business image becomes intertwined with personal happiness. No one wants to be the “pushy salesperson,” but you also don’t need to live in either extreme. It is possible to find happiness with success and still be viewed as a caring and productive member of the community. Sponsor a child soccer team, host an event for local seniors, etc. Getting your name out there

and telling others you are successful is not flaunting your success; it is sharing your success with others.

Playing it safe is ingrained in the fabric of who we are as people:

- Evolutionary Heritage: - Human evolution prioritized safety for survival.
- Emotional Oversimplification: - In its attempt to make sense of the world, the human brain tends to simplify complex emotions.
- Defense Mechanisms: - Individuals who have experienced trauma or adversity may employ the illusion of safety as a defense mechanism.
- Societal Influence: - Certain cultures heavily emphasize the pursuit of safety, stability, and conformity, causing individuals to prioritize safety over personal happiness.
- Fear of the Unknown: - Much like the puppy and the new toy, the unknown is often perceived as a threat, triggering a fear response. People may resist change and cling to what they perceive as safe, even if it doesn't bring them genuine happiness.

Finding the space between safety and happiness comes down to using one of the most overused clichés..." Step outside your comfort zone." Don't worry, I am groaning for you. The five most overused words in the English language are overused for a reason. "Playing it safe" is fine, but it will usually allow you to only dip your toe in the success pool that you're seeking.

Guerilla Marketing

If you haven't already, read the book "Guerrilla Marketing" by Jay Conrad Levinson. Published in 1984, it introduces unconventional and low-cost marketing strategies for small businesses with limited budgets. But it is not just a book; it's a powerful guide that encourages individuals to step out of their comfort zones and explore unconven-

tional sales and marketing tactics. In the world of business, it's easy to fall into the trap of safety and familiarity, sticking to traditional methods. However, Levinson's book challenges this conventional thinking and inspires readers to push themselves beyond their comfort zones. By doing so, individuals can achieve remarkable success in the business world. This book serves as a reminder that the path to happiness and true success often lie outside the comfort zone, where innovation and creativity thrive. Levinson's strategies and insights provide a roadmap for entrepreneurs and marketers to find their unique way in the business world, break free from the limitations of conventional thinking, and adopt innovative strategies to connect with clients in ways that set them apart from competitors. It encourages a mindset that is willing to take risks and explore new avenues for successful client canvassing in several ways:

- **Creative Approaches:** The book emphasizes unconventional and creative marketing strategies. Salespeople can learn to approach potential clients with unique and imaginative ideas that stand out from traditional methods. These unique ideas encourage creativity in the sales process, providing a safe place for people who strive to be less "sales-y."

- **Low-Cost Strategies:** Guerrilla marketing is all about achieving maximum impact with minimal resources. Salespeople can benefit from learning cost-effective ways to reach and engage clients. This mindset encourages resourcefulness and efficiency and alleviates stress for new people looking to get their "start."

- **Innovative Communication:** The book provides insights into alternative communication channels, such as guerrilla advertising and unconventional promotional methods. Salespeople can adapt these ideas to create memorable interactions with clients, making their pitch more engaging and effective.

- **Understanding Consumer Behavior:** Guerrilla marketing often involves understanding the psychology of consumers. Salespeople can learn to connect with clients on a deeper level by incorporating insights from the book on consumer behavior and preferences.

- **Adaptability:** The guerrilla marketing approach encourages adaptability and the ability to pivot quickly. Salespeople can apply this mindset to adjust their strategies based on client responses, market changes, and emerging trends.

- **Building Relationships:** The book highlights the importance of building relationships with clients. Salespeople can benefit from emphasizing long-term connections rather than one-time transactions, fostering trust and loyalty. Similar to avoiding the 1:1 Mentality.

- **Maximizing Limited Resources:** For salespeople with limited budgets or resources, "Guerrilla Marketing" provides practical tips on making the most of what is available. This can be particularly useful for those operating in competitive markets with financial constraints.

The Consequences of Playing It Safe

Mistaking safety for happiness can have both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, feeling safe can create a stable foundation from which individuals can explore and pursue their sources of happiness. However, the negative consequences can be more insidious:

- **Stagnation:** As discussed, safety often comes from a reluctance to step outside one's comfort zone. When people resist change and avoid taking risks, they may become complacent. This lack of growth and new experiences can lead to boredom and a sense of unfulfillment.

- **Missed Opportunities/Unrealized Potential:** Happiness can be found in pursuing one's passions, dreams, and aspirations. By settling

for safety, individuals may miss out on opportunities for personal and professional development, fulfilling relationships, and new adventures that could lead to genuine happiness, plus have untapped potential and talents that may remain undiscovered.

- **Limited Personal Growth:** Stepping out of one's comfort zone is often the path to personal growth and self-discovery. It involves facing challenges and learning from one's experiences. Safety alone does not foster personal growth; without growth, individuals may struggle to find long-lasting happiness.

- **Limited Relationships/Emotional Suppression:** Often, building meaningful relationships involves vulnerability and taking emotional risks. Settling for safety might result in a reluctance to form deep connections with others, leading to a lack of social support and emotional connection that contribute to happiness. This emotional suppression can result in feelings of frustration, anxiety, and even depression.

- **Resentment:** Over time, people who prioritize safety over their happiness in their personal and professional lives may resent people they kept safe or resent others who have pursued their dreams.

In your personal life, activities and actions that may help you break free from the safety trap and contribute to your happiness include traveling, pursuing a new hobby or passion, setting challenging fitness goals, or expressing creativity (one of the most challenging things for entrepreneurs, who are typically type A personalities, to do). Sharing your creative work, whether through writing, art, music, or other forms of self-expression, can be intimidating and gratifying.

Professionally, some things can be done to loosen the shackles of the safety trap:

- **Networking Events:** Attending industry gatherings and networking events may feel uncomfortable, but they are opportunities to build crucial connections and explore potential partnerships.

- **Public Speaking:** Delivering presentations or pitches can be challenging, yet effective communication is essential for success.

- **Embracing Innovation:** Adapting to new technologies and business trends might push you out of your comfort zone, but it fosters growth and competitiveness.

- **Seeking Mentorship:** Approaching mentors for guidance requires stepping out of your comfort zone, but the insights gained can significantly impact your professional development.

- **Taking Calculated Risks:** Business success often involves taking well-thought-out risks, facing the unknown, and overcoming the fear of failure.

- **Negotiation Skills:** Negotiating deals and contracts can be tough, but mastering this skill is crucial for achieving positive business outcomes.

- **Delegating Responsibilities:** Entrusting others with important tasks may feel uncomfortable, but it allows business leaders to focus on strategic aspects and promotes team growth.

- **Learning from Failure:** Embracing failure as a chance to learn requires humility and resilience, challenging the comfort of avoiding mistakes.

- **Adapting to Change:** Business environments are dynamic, and adapting to changes may be uncomfortable, but it ensures resilience and long-term success.

- **Volunteering or charity work:** Contributing your time and business skills to help others in need can be deeply rewarding and create a sense of purpose.

“Self-awareness is realising that there is no opponent – you’re fighting against yourself.”

-Stephen Bartlett Diary of a CEO

Look, if you are the type of person who always chooses comfort over calculated risks, I get it—safety has its appeal. It gives you a feeling of stability and order. The comfort zone might feel cozy but can become a self-made prison. I challenge you in your professional AND personal life to question your reasons and desired outcomes constantly and consistently. To make it big in business, you must realize that true happiness and career success often come from pushing past what's familiar and secure. Successful salespeople know how to balance feeling safe with taking intelligent risks that lead to real growth. It's a mindset that separates those who just get by from those who truly thrive and succeed.