

CHAPTER SEVEN

BECOME CRYSTAL CLEAR

PRINCIPLED, POINTED, & PURPOSE-DRIVEN

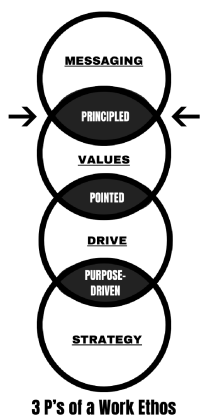
The Three Pillars of a Business Work Ethos: Principled, Pointed, and Purpose-Driven. The Oxford Dictionary defines "ethos" as the characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its beliefs and aspirations. In a business context, "ethos" refers to the fundamental character, values, and pillars that shape the culture and identity of an organization.

A "pillar" in business is a fundamental element representing a company's core beliefs, ultimately influencing how it conducts itself, makes decisions, and interacts with employees, clients, and the broader community. Pillars can be flexible in their application, as they apply to various aspects such as marketing, branding, and culture through

their Mission and Vision statements, Values and Ethics, Innovation and Adaptability, Customer Focus, and Community and Social Responsibility. Essentially, the "pillars" of a business are the fundamental principles or core elements that support its operations, shape its identity, and guide its growth. And don't get me started on what a business "tenet" is...moving on.

Three fundamental pillars, Principled, Pointed, and Purpose-Driven, which I often refer to as the "3 P's of a business work ethos," guide a business on its path to success. These pillars bring unique benefits to business owners and their clients, ultimately fostering a culture of trust (Principled), integrity (Pointed), and achievement (Purpose-Driven).

Being Principled in Business Through Clear Messaging and Defined Values



Fundamental business principles are statements a company adheres to when identifying its priorities. Being Principled in your business promotes clear messaging and the development of core values, serving as a moral compass for an organization. This approach builds a strong foundation for decision-making and ensures that people within and outside the company clearly understand its mission,

products, and services. This principled approach nurtures trust with clients as they clearly understand what to expect. Transparent and

easy-to-understand messaging empowers clients to make informed choices, and shared values create connections.

Lost in Ambiguity: A Networking Nightmare

Networking events and business conferences are valuable opportunities to connect with like-minded professionals, expand one's network, and discover potential collaborations. However, not all encounters at such events lead to fruitful connections. Cue the story of 'Amy and My Networking Nightmare.'

Several years back, I attended a Women in Business Conference. I was networking, as one does. At the conference, I met a woman business owner, let's call her Amy (mostly because it's a short name and easy to type over and over again). Amy was on my short list of people I wanted to meet at this conference, as she was renowned for her frequent conference attendance and hosting. If she wasn't attending networking events, she was collaborating with networking groups to host 'get-togethers' or 'lunch-and-learns.' This reputation led me to believe that Amy was an ideal person to connect with; given her extensive experience, she must be a pro, right?

What followed was entirely unexpected. When I finally had the chance to meet Amy and engage in conversation, it quickly became apparent that something was amiss. Despite my sincere attempts to understand her business and the services she offered, the explanations provided were frustratingly vague and perplexing. It was as if the more questions I asked, the more elusive the answers became. Perhaps it was the environment of the conference? Maybe it was me? Could it be her? I mean, anyone can have an "off" day, right?

I followed up with Amy post-conference and had a Zoom meeting with her. I was hoping now, without the distractions of a conference,

I could get to the heart of her business and finally figure out how we could become great referral partners. About 10 minutes into the Zoom, it became apparent it wasn't me; it was her. During our Zoom meeting, Amy's inability to convey clear and concise information about her business continued. I couldn't ascertain if her business was truly thriving because her messaging was in disarray, making it challenging to understand what specific services her company provided or how we could collaborate.

The basics of "what went wrong": When discussing various aspects of her business, her explanations remained vague. She used industry jargon without providing context, assuming I understood what she meant. When I asked for specific examples or clarification, she repeated herself with the previous info, therefore not providing any clarity. Since I genuinely wanted to understand her business better, I attempted to guide the conversation. At one point, I asked Amy to give a clear elevator pitch, define her company identity, or provide a concise description of her core pillars, principles, ideal clients, or services. However, her response left me even more perplexed than before. She offered some information on certain aspects of her work without ever honing in on a core message or identifying "pain points" she solves for her clients. Look, the words we use to describe what we do are important; they bridge the gap between your value proposition and your client's needs. My conversations with Amy left me feeling as though she lacked a clear business plan and had neither a defined target audience nor a well-defined business model.

By the end of the Zoom call, I had to admit defeat. I had invested enough time and effort trying to understand Amy's business, but her poor messaging and inability to provide straightforward answers had alienated me. I realized that no matter how experienced or well-connected someone might be, effective communication and clarity in

conveying their business's message or clearly defining the company values and benefits are paramount for successful networking and collaboration.

Ultimately, my encounter with Amy was a reminder of the importance of clear and concise business messaging built from a foundation of fundamental values. It highlighted how a lack of planning and effective communication can lead to missed opportunities with business partners as well as clients.

When a business has unclear messaging, it can have several negative effects, including:

- **Confusion:** Confusion can make it challenging for clients to make informed decisions or take action.
- **Distrust:** Unclear messaging can make potential clients skeptical about the business's credibility and legitimacy.
- **Loss of Interest:** Lack of clarity in messaging can result in potential clients moving on to competitors with clearer communication and who effectively convey their value.
- **Increased Bounce Rate:** For online businesses, unclear messaging can lead to a higher bounce rate on websites and landing pages. Visitors may leave the site without taking any action because they can't figure out what pain points will be addressed by the business.
- **Brand Erosion:** Over time, unclear messaging can erode a business's brand identity and reputation. A lack of consistency and clarity can dilute the brand's message and impact its ability to stand out in the market.
- **Wasted Marketing Efforts:** Businesses with unclear messaging may invest in marketing campaigns that don't yield optimal results. Marketing efforts become less effective when the messaging doesn't resonate with the target audience. This might be the case with Amy.

I initially believed that Amy's frequent attendance at networking events was a sign of her thriving business. However, upon closer consideration and experience, she might be attending these events out of necessity, possibly to compensate for the higher required number of contacts needed to sell her services effectively. In other words, if most businesses need 10 contacts to secure a single sale, Amy could require as many as 20 contacts to achieve the same sales result. This situation is possibly due to unclear messaging, leading to a higher drop-off rate and a greater need for marketing efforts. We may never know the answer to these questions since I won't be the one to call and ask Amy; besides, I doubt I'd get a straight answer. So, how do you avoid unclear messaging? The simple answer: you become crystal clear.

Being crystal clear in your business messaging is crucial for effectively communicating your business value proposition, mission, and products/services to your target audience.

- **Know Your Principles:** Figure out the most important values and pillars that guide your business. These should match your goals and what you want to do for your clients and the community.
- **Simple Mission and Vision:** Write down your business's main purpose and what it wants to achieve (Mission Statement). Decide on your aspirational path and outline your long-term goals (Vision Statement). Your mission and vision statements should be concise and easy to understand, and make sure they reflect your core principles.
- **Understand Your Audience:** Learn about your ideal clients. Understand their needs, pain points, and preferences. This knowledge helps you tailor your messaging to resonate with them effectively and in a way they'll understand. If you are not crystal clear on who your target audience is, check out Chapter Eight: Define Your Avatar.
- **Use Clear Language:** Don't use complicated words or phrases; avoid jargon. Keep your messages simple and easy. Consistency in your

messaging across all communication channels reinforces clarity and helps people recognize you. AKA: Branding.

- **Craft a Unique Value Proposition:** Clearly articulate what sets your business apart from competitors. Highlight your services, indicate the benefits and solutions for your clients, and explain how they align with your principles.

- **Create a Brand Style Guide:** Creating a unique and distinctive identity for your company. By strategically developing your company's name, logo, design elements, messaging, and overall image, you will differentiate it from competitors and leave a lasting impression on clients. Make internal rules about how your brand looks and sounds. Decide on fonts, colors, logos, and tone of voice to ensure your brand is clear and consistent.

- **Authentic & Transparent Messaging:** Be clear about your business's value proposition. Share your principles, how you work, and what issues you care about and want to solve in your client's lives. People trust businesses that are honest and open.

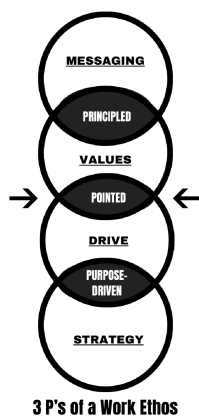
- **Simplify Complicated Information:** If your business deals with tricky ideas or concepts, break them down into simple parts. Use pictures, stories, or examples to make it easier for people to understand.

- **Prioritize Clarity Over Creativity:** While it's good to be creative, don't make your messages so clever that people can't understand their meaning. Make sure your message is clear before trying to be fancy.

Being Pointed in Business by Aligning Values with Drive

Being Principled in business involves clear messaging and upholding values. The second pillar, being Pointed, shares common ground with being Principled but with a crucial distinction: in business you align your values with your 'drive to succeed' resulting in becoming "integrity-driven." To illustrate, think of defining your values, building your business, and pursuing success with determination, much like skillfully driving a bus. Your values serve as your chosen route; the business is the bus itself, and your determination is the fuel for your journey. You navigate your business journey much like a bus driver steers the vehicle – staying on course, adjusting as needed, and overcoming obstacles with focus and commitment to reach your desired destination: success.

Taking your business "on the road" through marketing and client prospecting is how you drive your business toward your goals. Any obstacle or challenge along the way cannot be more important than reaching your destination. You must become crystal clear about what you want, long-term, for your business and what you're willing to do to get there. Here are two steps that will help maintain your business integrity and align your values with your purpose and your drive to succeed.



3 P's of a Work Ethos

Honesty: Being honest with yourself is a critical aspect of starting and running a successful business, though often overlooked. This self-honesty involves a deep and candid assessment of your strengths, weaknesses, values, and the realistic boundaries you set for how you want to grow your business. In Chapter One (Rejection Is A Gift), we covered how the Masochist and the Schrödinger's Salesperson handled making outbound calls differently. Being in a business that would typically require you to make outbound calls when, in fact, you have no interest in making outbound calls is setting yourself up for failure. Being honest encompasses recognizing your own limitations, understanding your motivations, and being clear about what you are and aren't willing to compromise on.

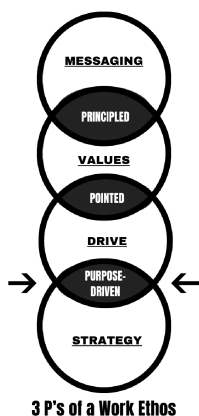
Make It Fail: I often play a little game with myself when taking on a new challenge. (Hilton, party of one!) Before investing time and resources into any idea, I try to make it fail. The concept of "making it fail" before entirely investing in a new business idea is a reasonable risk management approach. This strategy often involves "stress testing" an idea by intentionally seeking out the conditions, assumptions, or factors that could lead to a business idea's failure. The reasoning behind this approach is not to foster negativity but to proactively identify and address potential pitfalls, thereby increasing the project's chances of success or deciding to scrap it and move on.

Making it fail will help you in:

- Identifying Weaknesses and Assumptions
- Encouraging Resilience and Flexibility
- Promoting Innovation and Creative Thinking
- Saving Time and Resources
- Facilitating Learning and Growth

To really test your business idea, you might talk to potential customers to see if they're interested, look at your competition to see if you have a real shot or check your budget to make sure you can afford to bring your idea to life. The main goal is to be honest with yourself and be ready to change your plan if needed. Seeing your idea's weak spots isn't fun, but it's a crucial step in making your business as strong as possible.

Being Purpose-Driven in Business by Aligning Your Drive to Succeed with Your Strategy



A purpose-driven business is one that combines its messaging and values (Principled) with its purpose and drive to succeed (Pointed) and places everything at the forefront of its operational strategy. Being a purpose-driven company usually involves aiming to make a positive impact on society, the environment, or a particular community beyond merely seeking profits. Purpose-driven companies often

integrate their mission into every aspect of their business, from product development and marketing to supply chain management and customer service. We will cover this more in Chapter Eight: Business, Niche, Specialize, but most small business owners know whom they are called to serve. Many entrepreneurs are inspired to start their businesses by a desire to solve a problem or address an issue they faced in their own lives, often tracing back to their younger years. This personal connection to the problem not only fuels their passion but

also provides a deep understanding of the issue at hand, making them uniquely qualified to create a solution. For instance, someone who struggled with learning difficulties as a child might be motivated to develop an innovative educational tool or platform that makes learning more accessible and engaging for students with similar challenges. This firsthand experience with the problem ensures that the solutions they develop are deeply rooted in empathy and a genuine understanding of the needs of those they aim to help.

Here are a few examples of purpose-driven businesses and how their drive to achieve combined with a purpose driven strategy:

- Patagonia - An outdoor apparel company that is deeply committed to environmental sustainability. Patagonia's purpose is to save our home planet, and it aligns all its business practices with this mission. This includes using sustainable materials, investing in renewable energy, and donating a portion of its profits to environmental causes. Patagonia's drive to succeed is bolstered by its commitment to transparency, ethical sourcing, and environmental activism, showing that a business can be both profitable and purpose-driven.

- Warby Parker - An eyewear company that operates on a buy-one-give-one model, aiming to address the problem of access to glasses in developing countries. For every pair of glasses sold, Warby Parker donates a pair to someone in need. The company's purpose-driven approach is complemented by its focus on customer experience, innovative design, and cost efficiency, proving that a mission-driven business can also excel in delivering value to its customers.

- TOMS Shoes - Similar to Warby Parker, TOMS started with a model of donating a pair of shoes to a child in need for every pair sold. Over time, TOMS has expanded its mission to include water, sight, and safe birth initiatives. The company's drive to succeed is enhanced by its adaptability, commitment to transparency, and engagement

with its customer community, showcasing how purpose can evolve and expand while still guiding a company's operations and growth. As an aside, I am wearing TOMS as I type this. Love this company!

These examples illustrate that being purpose-driven in business requires more than just a drive to succeed financially; it also necessitates a commitment to a set of values and principles that guide the company's messaging and actions. Traits such as transparency, ethical practices, adaptability, customer focus, and community engagement are crucial for a purpose-driven business to effectively integrate its mission with its operational strategies and achieve both its social and commercial goals. By doing so, these companies demonstrate that success and purpose are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary forces that can drive innovation, customer loyalty, and long-term sustainability.

Understanding and aligning with the three pillars of a business work ethos – Principled, Pointed, and Purpose-Driven – is essential for achieving success in business. These pillars serve as guiding principles that shape a company's culture, decision-making processes, and overall strategy. Being Principled involves clear messaging and well-defined values, which creates a strong foundation for decision-making and fosters trust with clients. When a business owner's drive to succeed is aligned with these principles, it allows them to navigate challenges more effectively and confidently pursue growth opportunities. Additionally, being Pointed means aligning values with purpose and drive, ensuring that every aspect of the business is focused on achieving its goals. Finally, being Purpose-Driven involves integrating the company's mission and values into its operations and strategy, allowing it to make a positive impact while also driving success. By becoming crystal clear and embracing these pillars, businesses can create a solid framework for sustainable growth and long-term success.