







Before Upping The Shutters

A Guide to Background Preparation Before Opening a Business

Author

Ravindra Kathale



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Thanks, all of you!

Ravindra Kathale.



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Disclaimer: The contents of this book are thoughts and opinions of the author based on his readings, thinking and experiences. Other thinkers and practitioners may or may not agree with him. The contents of the book are not a full check-list of actions to be taken before starting a business. The subject is vast. It is meant only to create awareness about some of the aspects that the author feels are crucial in the process but may be neglected. Attempting to start a business, based solely on the advice contained in the book is not advisable and the author cannot be held responsible for the consequences of doing so.

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Dedication

अर्पण



हे माझे पहिले पुस्तक मी माझे वडील कै. प्रा. चित्तरंजन ना.
कठाळे यांच्या स्मृतीस अर्पण करतो.

नागपूर

दि. २१.११.२०१२



About the Author

Ravindra Kathale is an author, a speaker, a trainer, and an ex-banker.

His mission is to encourage entrepreneurship and he guides and helps young boys and girls having technical skills to start and grow their service ventures.

Born and educated in Nagpur and Akola, he holds a Science and a Law degree from the Nagpur University.

He took an early retirement from his bank's service and started a Core Banking Consultancy, thus becoming a first generation entrepreneur in his family. He combines the knowledge and experience he gained from this venture and years as a lending banker and the vast reading he did on entrepreneurship and business and related subjects with his passionate love for entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship to consult those who wish to start their own professional service business.



He loves writing, has been running two blogs where he intermittently publishes his posts and contributes articles to the renowned Ezine Articles (www.ezinearticles.com).

Before Upping the Shutters is Mr. Kathale's first eBook and he hopes to write many more.

He is married and has a wife and two daughters.

He has been involved in dramatics and debating in his college days. He also has one year experience of wrestling!

He is deeply interested in music – classical, old film songs and Marathi songs. He's most happy talking about them.

He is easily contactable on his website, his email ravindra@ravindrakathale.in and by phone and snail mail.



Preface

This book started writing itself way back in 2007. I had quit my job and started a one-man consultancy service. I immediately got my first client – in fact, even before I was released from my previous job. As I went along, many questions started popping up. I have no family background (family history?) in business and had to turn to books and the Internet to find answers. I spent thousands of Rupees on buying books (and then reading them!—hours and hours), hundreds of hours browsing the Net, subscribing to blogs, reading posts, searching for answers. I downloaded books and papers from the Net and studied them. I took notes, did exercises, did a lot of writing to clarify concepts to myself. I could see some light.

Whenever introduced to anybody doing business – any kind of business – I would ask him questions. In the beginning I did not even know what questions to ask and how to ask them.

Then my consultancy failed.

After the initial shock and sulking, after the deeply hurt ego recovered a bit, I again sat down and wrote out all the mistakes I made – not a confession, nor self-whipping, nor did I play the blame game. I tried to be as objective as possible. A clinical, laboratory procedure. An emotionless autopsy. Assuming the role of a business consultant, I enquired into 'The Causes that Lead to the Failure of the Core Banking Consultancy Service of One of My Clients, Mr. R C Kathale, B Sc LL B, CAIIB'. (I could have written a neat book titled 'The Curious Facts Leading to the Failure of Mr. Kathale's Consultancy'. Sounds like the title of one of Agatha Christie's bestsellers, doesn't it?)

One part of my personality deeply *feels* for others. It prompts me to be a Good Samaritan. I reasoned that there are several technically qualified professionals rendering professional services. They will also make the same or similar mistakes and I must rescue them.

A young man started an Internet Café close to where I was staying. I used to visit his café for scanning and printing work. A posh 16-cubicle air-conditioned café on the ground floor (in Mumbai!!), but hardly any surfers. I could see that he was doing all the wrong things and not doing any of the right things. The rescuer in me woke up and started advising him. But he was as cocksure about managing his business as I was of my supreme mastery over the Constitution of India when I was in LL B Part I, (first semester). He argued with me on all points and rejected them. This went on for some three four months.

Then his Café closed down. We did not meet even to say goodbye.



I felt sorry.

It was painful to see the business going down the drain. Many times I wished I had never met him.

Although I was an unintended beneficiary of his business.

His business was a live case study for me. This whole episode compelled me do a lot of concrete thinking and helped me validate several of the concepts and models I had read about.

Years passed.

One day, on the 11th October, 2012, to be precise, while taking stock of my repertoire, I decided to write a book for such starters.

Next time I see someone on the path the Internet Café owner walked, the rescuer in me will again try to tell him a thing or two. But he will debate with me and reject my advice. Then I'll say "Look here, I am some kind of an expert on this. I even wrote a book on this subject. Its name is Before Upping the Shutters. Go download it from www.ravindrakathale.in.' Then maybe, just maybe, he will listen.

Hopefully one business will be saved.



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How do I Use This Book?

Good question. I'm glad you asked. Shows your thorough nature. I like that.

One answer, and most useful, is, '**wisely**'.

Which means follow the following course:

1. Get this book printed and spiral bound.
2. Buy a 200-pages notebook, (a notebook, not a register) sturdily bound.
3. Gather together a number of coloured pens. Also include blue and black.
4. Write your name on both, the book and the notebook.
5. Take those earplugs off and switch off the mobile and the TV.
6. Start reading from the cover page. Keep a pen in hand.
7. If you want to have a feel as if I am talking to you, keep my photo in front of you. But this step is optional! (Ok, ok, I was just being funny here.)
8. Read with the assumption that it is meant for your benefit. (You won't be let down. I promise.)
9. Read the book as a workbook, not a novel.
10. As you read, keep asking yourself, "**How can I use this for my business?**"
11. As you read further, a number of thoughts and questions will crop up in your mind.
12. Write your responses to those questions, those thoughts and unanswered questions in the margin of the book or in the note book. Don't forget to write the page number for later reference.
13. Underline any sentence you feel is important. Give it more thought. Write down your responses.
14. If you disagree with something I say, note it down and write in **red** ink "**I don't agree with this.**" Then, in **blue** or black ink write why you disagree and what your view is.
15. Now assume, for the sake of argument, that what I say is right and continue reading with open mind. It is a sign of a great mind to entertain a thought without agreeing with it.



16. If I ask you to do some exercise, do it and do it seriously. There is reason for it, even if it may not be apparent.
17. Simultaneously, keep jotting points and ideas you liked. This is important.
18. Do not read for more than 1.30 hours at a stretch. (I think this is the most liked instruction!)
19. At the end of the 1.30 hours, stop reading.
20. Read your jottings once, to make sure that nothing is missing.
21. Fire up your computer and send me a mail stating:
 - a. How many pages you have read.
 - b. What ideas you did not agree with and reasons for disagreement.
 - c. What action points you have jotted for yourself,
 - d. What ideas, points, and sentences you liked or enjoyed, even if it is only humour. (I like to be appreciated.), and,
 - e. How you are feeling after reading up to that point.

My email address is ravindra@ravindrakathale.in
22. Repeat this procedure till you come to the end of the book, including the appendices.
23. From the second mail onwards, let me know if you found answers to your questions within the book. If you found them elsewhere tell me so. Also let me know whether your view (about where we disagreed) has changed and why?
- I promise to reply to your mails within 24 hours. Try me out.**
24. After finishing the book, you are free to read any chapters you want to, in any order you like.
25. If you like this book and feel it is useful, pass it on to anyone who you think will benefit from it. Read the copyright part first.
26. I also invite you to suggest me other topics on which you think a similar eBook will be useful. Let me see what I can do with them. (No promises at this juncture.)

And most important:

27. Don't think our engagement is over with your finishing the book and sending me the mail and taking actions suggested by me. Do not think twice to mail me for any issue that nags you in spite of your efforts.



My email id, again, is ravindra@ravindrakathale.in

Thanks and a very happy and fruitful reading and **ACTION**.



My 14 Assumptions about You

There are a few assumptions I am making while writing this book. This I am doing for facilitating the process of writing and maintaining a certain focus. I am aware that this is artificial. I am very well aware that not all of these assumptions will apply to you. That, however will not in any way affect the applicability of the principles we will be discussing. They are universal.

The **first** assumption I am making is that you are very young, just graduating or just graduated.

The **second** assumption I am making is that you have earned or are about to earn a technical degree (perhaps in the field of information technology, but that does not matter).

The **third** assumption I am making is that you belong to the typical middle-class strata of the society. Which means that you have a laptop, a bike (a scooter, if you are a girl) and a high end mobile phone. (Am I missing anything?)

My **fourth** assumption is that now that you have finished your studies, (or are just about to), there is an external (family and relatives) and internal (yourself) pressure on you to be on your own and start earning.

The **fifth** assumption I make is that you are currently in the process of deciding what you will do for earning your livelihood.

My **sixth** assumption is that there is no business background in your family or relatives or acquaintances. So if you decide to start your own business you will be the first one in your family to do so, what is technically called the *first generation entrepreneur*.

A corollary of the sixth assumption is that you are unlikely to get business guidance within the family. This is my **seventh** assumption.

The **eighth** one is that although you have appeared or will appear for the on-campus recruitment interviews, you are open about considering other options available for earning a livelihood.

My **ninth** assumption is that whatever the mode of earning the livelihood, you wish to put your technical knowledge and skill to use for this purpose.

My **tenth** assumption is that although you did think about striking on your own, you felt a bit uncomfortable about it, because what information you had was not enough and what you heard from others was not very encouraging.



My **eleventh** assumption is that your friends are also similarly placed about the above assumptions and especially about the tenth one.

I therefore assume (assumption number **twelve**) that because of the above there is a strong preference towards seeking a job.

The **thirteenth** assumption that I make is that you are afraid of resistance from your immediate family if you consider starting your own business as the first option. (I shall be very happy if this assumption proves wrong for all of you.)

And then there is a whole bunch of assumptions, which I will bundle into one, giving it number **fourteen**. I assume that you are techno-savvy and know how to use technology even if you are not a technology student. Especially you know handling of social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.) much better than me. I further assume that you are intelligent, quick to learn new things and concepts, are a methodical worker and a hard-working person. I also assume that you have such qualities as perseverance, honesty, straightforwardness, caring, dependability, trustworthiness. I assume that you are enthusiastic, quick to act and do not put things off and that you are action-oriented.

I am very certain that you do have these qualities, don't worry even if you think you don't. Later on we will have a look at some of the qualities that you will need to hone in for better results.

This exercise of writing down my assumptions about you has created in my mind an excellent picture of you and I feel now I am can better relate to you. You also must have seen your word portrait of yourself in the above paragraphs.

With this clarity, let's turn to the task on hand.



Do Not Feel Guilty, If You Desire to be Rich

Each and every one of us wants to be rich. We have always wanted to be. But the middle-class philosophy has always acted as a barrier to openly talk about it and try to achieve that goal. The middle-class as a whole says: Simple Living and High Thinking. So the underlying suggestion is, don't be rich. Be middle-class. There are several arguments put forth in support of not becoming wealthy. I do not wish to go into them: all of them are illogical and hold no substance.

What I will instead do is just illustrate to you that earning riches has always been supported by the Hindu religion. That will take care of any feeling of guilt about earning a lot of money that may have been put into you.

Hindu religion is a way of life. It touches not only our *aadhyatmic* and *paarmarthik* life but also our personal, family and social life. Although it is fashionable to dismiss everything our religion advises, it has a lot of value.

Our ancestors always realized the importance of money and wealth in every form. That is why cattle is called *pashudhan* and *godhan*. That is why they highlighted it everywhere.

Observe our deities. See their pictures. These pictures are painted based on their descriptions in various *granthas*. Observe that each and every deity is adorned with gold ornaments. All except *Bhagawan Shankar*, who has renounced it all. Look at *bhagavan* Vishnu, Krishna, Saraswati, Lakshmi. How many ornaments are they wearing? If Hindu religion did not give importance to wealth, why would they be described and depicted wearing so many ornaments?

If our religion did not consider wealth important and desirable, why do we have Goddess Lakshmi, who symbolizes wealth, prosperity and plenty? Why do we worship her every day and specially in Deepawali?

Now come down to human beings described at various places. I will give you some examples.

There is an Upanishad called Kathopanishad. It starts with telling us that the father of Nachiketa (the main character in the story) performed a yagna and gave away ten thousand old and fallow (?) cows. Now think. If he could give away ten thousand cows, how many cows must he be owning? He surely must not have given away all that he had. Second, the cows were unproductive. Maintaining unproductive cows is very expensive. If he could afford to keep ten thousand such cows, how rich he must be?

Later in the same story, Nachiketa goes to Yama, the God of death, to seek knowledge. Yama tests his resolve to learn by offering him unlimited wealth. Surely that unlimited wealth was only a part of his total wealth.

There is a Sukta called Shri Sukta. You may have heard about it and also the sukta itself. It is recited in every major pooja. This sukta is dedicated to Goddess



Lakshmi. In this sukta the worshiper urges Lakshmi Devi to come and stay in his home with the same ease as a mother would come and stay at her son's place. He further says that to facilitate her arrival and stay, he would drive away her elder sister – Alakshmi, which means, he will work energetically, be industrious, maintain cleanliness and treat her as he would treat his mother. Further he says, "Since I am born in this country, I have a right to fame and prosperity." and prays her to give him the same.

Which other religion has hymns dedicated to wealth and prosperity?

Then again, another sukta, called "Rudra", which is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The first part of Rudra is in praise of Rudra. The second part consists of asking him various things including wealth, prosperity and other worldly things.

This is so because wealth is important.

Wealth is important for those who are grihasthashrami. Grihasthas i. e. those who have families need wealth to provide for the family and also for charity. It is therefore made compulsory for them to earn as much money as they can.

It is thus clear from the above examples that earning wealth is not only permitted in the Hindoo religion, but is in fact encouraged and mandated.

Therefore, if for any reason you are feeling guilty about wanting to earn a lot of money and become wealthy, shed that guilt here and now! Off with it! You know the truth and you know the logic about becoming wealthy. Beware of people who will try to dissuade you from this by saying that simple living and high thinking is preferable. 'Do the two, simplicity in living and high thinking, have any correlation? Is one dependent or antithetical to the other?' Ask them. King Janak, the father of Sita was the king of one of the richest empires. And he is very respectfully referred to as Rajarshi, i.e. a Raja and a Rishi in one.

But then, where has this denial come from? There are several reasons.

One, acceptance of wrong prescription. Sanyasins are prohibited from earning money. Because if they engage in money earning activities, they will have lesser time for aadhyatmik activities, which is their main purpose. Also, it will be difficult to keep mind away from such activities when they are doing sadhana. But without thinking through this, that prescription got accepted by non-sanyasins also. Two, jealousy. 'I am lazy. I do not want to work hard. So I am not going to be rich. But I would not like to see you become rich, you industrious fellow! So I will persuade you to keep away from it, by cooking up a suitable philosophy.' this kind of thinking. Therefore the entire culture becomes one to oppose industry. Three, the caste system. It lays strong restrictions on the type of activities one can do to earn livelihood. Thank God, these restrictions are falling apart. And also our stupid beliefs. The most dangerous belief is that Lakshmi and Saraswati are at loggerhead with each other and one will not stay where the other one is present. In other words, a learned man will not be rich. This belief has had the most devastating effect on the middle class. Since middle class has little capital, they could not undertake commerce on a large scale like

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