

LAUNCH ATELIER

At the heart of every new business adventure is a courageous individual willing to take a huge risk: the risk for something more. More autonomy, more freedom, and more power to do the work they love.

It's easy to idealize being an entrepreneur as simple. The story typically goes something like the:

You have an idea → you grow this idea into a thriving business → live happily every after.

Anyone who has ever ventured into the world of building a business knows it's not that simple.

Being an entrepreneur is hard work. It's easy to glamourize the lifestyle, and the potential freedom that it can bring. Yet, it's hard to get up each morning and answer the question "what will I do today that will support the growth of my business?"

And, let's be real. While the (perceived) perks of running a business are a plenty, the doubtful, fear-based questions are always present:

1. Will someone pay for my skills and talents?
2. Will someone buy my product? Who?
3. Is it possible to do the thing I love and be rewarded for it?
4. What else can I offer that will generate more interest (ie. sales, money, clients) in my business?
5. Can I make this a full-time gig and make it sustainable?

Figuring out a way to be an entrepreneur on your own terms requires a unique mix of courage, creativity, an adventurous spirit, and a willingness to learn and grow continuously.

Having launched a business from the ground up, I understand the challenges and frustrations that come from being an entrepreneur - determining where to start, how to start and what steps need to be taken in what order at what time. While there are a lot of excellent resources out there, I could never find a guide that was grounded in best practices and research. Further, and perhaps more importantly, I could never find a guide that supported the growth and development of my business in a way that best complimented *me*.

I believe the "me" missing from the equation was a big reason as to why my business only lasted 4 years. Without knowing who I was in the business (my values, purpose and vision), my business fumbled forward in fits and starts. Rarely did I feel anchored or secured in my decisions or direction. To a certain degree I constantly felt unsettled and nervous about...well, everything.

--

This guide is dedicated to helping you launch your business. *But not in the traditional sense.* Most of the materials available for new and budding entrepreneurs focus on the operational needs of launching a business. They help answer questions like “what products/services will I offer?”, “How will I market my business?”, “How much do I charge for X?”. Don’t get me wrong, focusing on operational needs is important, just not when you’re beginning the entrepreneurial journey. Understanding who you are as an entrepreneur first and then leveraging **you** to build your business is a necessary and essential first step.

How can you know if:

1. You’re offering the right product/skill or;
2. Marketing to the right audience

if you don’t know the purpose and value your business?

How can you know:

1. Who is your ideal client and;
2. How you will add value in their life

if you don’t know what matters to you and your core purpose?

Simply put, if you don’t know who you are as an entrepreneur and your unique purpose, the way you go about your business and what you offer doesn’t really matter.

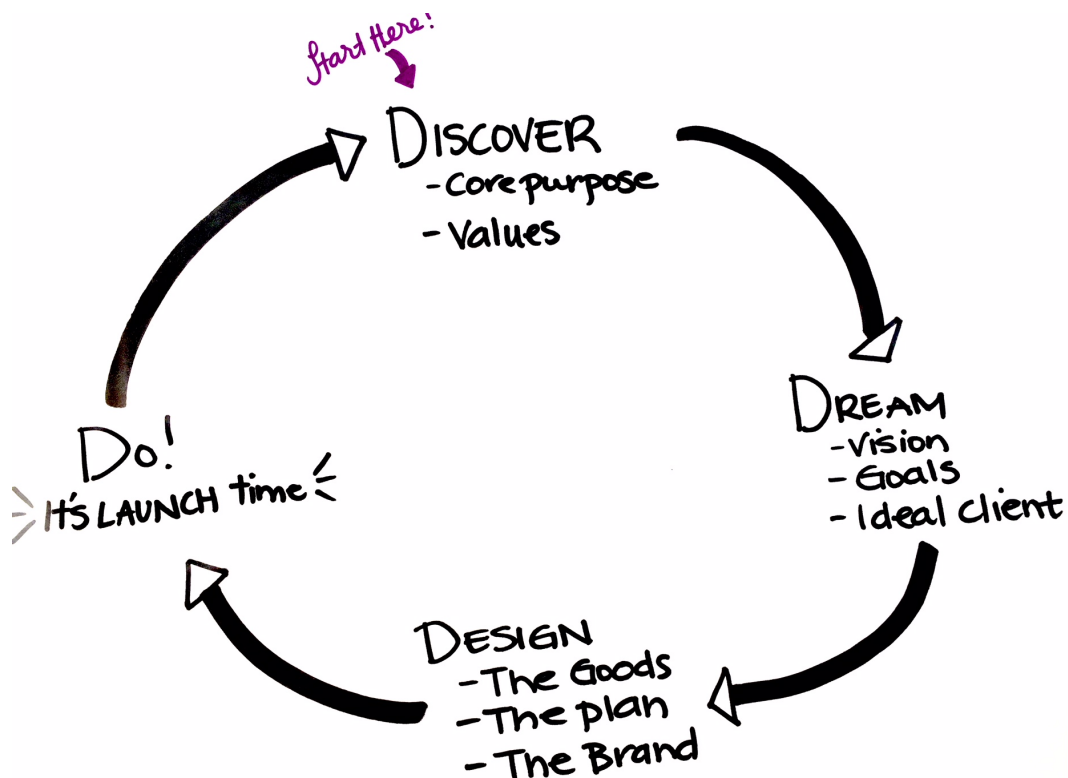
Understanding who you are, in your business, is the foundation from which everything else flows. Knowing and understanding your core purpose, values, and vision underpins and supports everything in your business, from decision making to attracting the ideal client.

This guide will walk you through uncovering your entrepreneur core and support you in launching your business with purpose and meaning.

A Business with Soul

To get the most out of this guide, there are a few things to keep in mind.

1. The foundation of this guide is a four-step process. In current psychology research, this process is called Appreciative Inquiry. Its purpose is to help you tap into the best of what already is. Each phase in the process will walk you through discovering your core, envisioning the future and designing an action plan that will move you closer to that envisioned future. As each step builds on the last, it's important that you do the steps in order as they appear.
2. Each phase contains a number of core elements that make up that phase. See the diagram below. Completing each element within the phase is important. Think of each element as a building block that will support the elements and phases that come next.



3. Think of this guide as your personal business coach. This guide will walk you through a number of exercises and questions to help you uncover and discover your purpose, values, and vision. I encourage you to take the time to sit with each question and to write the answers as they come.
 - a. This guide also asks that you gather information and feedback from other people. Including others in your journey is important!

4. Each element will walk through the same two stages: Diverge & Converge.
 - a. **Diverge:** This is the stage where anything goes. If you have a thought, an idea or inkling, write it down. If it's a half-baked thought, write it down. If it's a few words that don't make sense (right now), write it down. If it's an image or stick figure, put it down. Put it down, put it down, put it down. I cannot stress this enough. Don't censor your thoughts or feelings. Don't kill the creative insight you before it has a chance to offer its wisdom to your process.

Our brains have two main goals – Keeping you safe and survival. Anything that jeopardizes this causes our brains to go into red alert.

Me: I have an idea. I think this will really work!

Brain: I'm not sure...it seems risky

Me: Yeah, but what if...

Brain: No point even going there. We've tried that before, it's going to cost too much and does it really make sense? And besides, I'm not sure the idea was even good to begin with.

Me: Yeah, I guess your right...

Brain - 1: Launching - 0

The brain does its job well but often at the expense of growth, learning and innovation. When it comes to being an entrepreneur and launching our ideas into the world, everything seems risky and unsafe. Launching is a big deal. The diverge/converge process supports your inner creative to be free, while assuring the brain that it is safe.

- b. **Converge:** Once all of your ideas and feelings have been written down, we will move to the converge stage. This is the stage where we will go back and review what has been written, and filter it through those things that are important to us. Converging takes on many forms, however the goal is always the same: Narrow down the information into what's important and use it to propel yourself forward.
5. Whatever you write in this guide is yours. No one else has to see it if you don't want them to. Also, what is written is not right or wrong. Let me repeat that: ***You are you, and this guide is intended to tap into what makes you you. There is no right or wrong in that.*** Give yourself the permission to be authentically you, for you. Like it or not, as an entrepreneur, you are the heart of whatever endeavor you choose to engage in. Knowing you is the first step in creating a business that will add meaning and purpose to those you serve.

6. Handwrite your answers; don't use a computer. There is compelling research the links learning, knowledge and clarity of understanding directly to handwriting something vs. typing it out on a keyboard. As this process is about you and learning more about yourself (and by extension your business), the deeper you can make the learning the better.
7. Finally, enjoy and trust the process. Trust in yourself and your decisions. Trust your intuition and your inner wisdom. Believe me, as things get busy and your business takes off, finding the time to sit down and think about these questions will be a luxury. Do it now!

In the excitement and thrill of starting a business, the process of discovering your core might seem counter-intuitive. To a certain degree it is. But time and time again, research and experience has shown that those entrepreneurs grounded in values, purpose, and vision, are the ones that ultimately achieve everything they want, on their terms.

--

One last piece before we jump into **Phase One – Discovery**: the name of this process is *Launch Atelier*. According to the Oxford Dictionary, “to launch” means “to start or set in motion”. This process is exactly that, to start and set you and your entrepreneurial endeavors in motion. Second, “atelier” means “workshop” in French. To workshop something means to design, experiment, learn, reflect and grow. When launching your business there is no “right” way to do something. There is no such thing as perfection. Adopting a workshop mindset will enable you to work through this process, test your ideas, learn from the successes and setbacks and continue your launch upward.

Let's begin!

Phase One – Discovery

The Discovery Phase has two core elements: core purpose and values. In this phase we will be discovering who you are, outside of your business and outside of what products or services you want to launch into the world.

As stated earlier, you are the heart of any entrepreneurial adventure you choose to take. Whether your idea to start a single business or 400, it always *always* comes back to you. Knowing who you are as an entrepreneur is vital. Leveraging self-awareness - what drives you, motivates you, annoys you, bothers you, upsets you, brings you joy – makes your business that much more memorable and meaningful. It's the soul of anything you do.

Core Purpose & Values (Part 1):

Diverge

This exercise will be broken down into two components:

1. Self-discovery
2. Self-discovery through others

Self-Discovery

Read through the questions below and without censoring or filtering your responses, write as much as you can for each question below. Once you have answered each question, put it aside and move onto **Self-Discovery Through Others**. Also, at this point, don't go back and read your responses. Put it aside until you've finished the Self-Discovery Through Others.

1. Bring to mind a peak experience or moment when you felt alive, and on top of the world.
 - a. What were you doing? Be specific!
 - b. What stands out about this situation?
 - c. What qualities and gifts did you use that made this so memorable?
2. Think of someone in your life you admire. What are the qualities about this person that really stand out for you?
3. It's time to brag! What are your unique talents and strengths? What makes you, you?
4. Think back to a time when you purposely decided to develop or build a specific skill.
 - a. What skill was it?
 - b. What steps did you take to build this skill?
 - c. What about this process was important for you?

5. What activities put you into a flow state? Specifically, what activities do you like to engage in, where you get lost in the process and don't realize the passing of time?

Self-discovery Through Others

According to leading research on self-awareness, knowledge of self comes from two sources: How we see ourselves and how others see us. Sometimes these two lenses are connected, but often times they are not. Tapping into the perspectives of those we trust and respect can help us expand our own understanding of who we are.

First, create a list of *at least* three people whom you trust, respect and, whose opinion matters in your life (if you have more than 3, great! List them below). Think about those people who will be real champions for your entrepreneurial efforts. List them below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Either via email or in person, ask them to answer the following questions about you. If you are connecting in-person, send the questions ahead of time so as to allow the other person time to think about each question and be prepared to talk about them. When you meet to discuss these answers, your role is to ask the questions and take notes. If something is unclear, ask open-ended follow-up questions to help expand your understanding. Stay curious! Write whatever is said without filtering or censoring the information. As best as you can, write the information down verbatim.

1. Bring to mind a time when we worked together (either professionally or personally) that you would describe as a high point in being with me. A time when you felt energized and engaged.
 - a. Describe the situation and what we were doing.
 - b. What made this experience a high-point for you?
 - c. What did I do that made this memorable for you?
 - d. In this situation, what did you admire or value in me?
2. Bring to mind a time when you experienced me at my best.
 - a. What did you notice about me in this situation?

- b. What unique strengths or skills did I display during this situation?
 - c. What values or beliefs did I demonstrate?
3. What gifts and qualities do I have that stand out for you?
4. In our relationship, in what ways do I bring out the best in you?
5. What do you wish most for me in the next year?
6. What do you wish most for me in the next five years?

Core Purpose (Part 2):

Converge

You should now have two sets of information in front of you - That which you wrote about yourself and that which has come from others. In part two, your role is to review what was written and discover similarities, commonalities and patterns among all the information. Follow the steps (in order) below:

1. Read all the information together in one sitting. Don't do anything else but read. Mentally note anything that stands out for you.
2. With a pen or highlighter read back through the notes again, underlining/highlighting words or phrases that stand out for you. Again, don't censor or try to make meaning of it.
3. Go back to all the words or phrases you have underlined or highlighted. We are now going to be transferring the words and phrases from their original place and into a different location. For this step, you will need post-it notes. Write individual words or phrases on a single post-it note in black marker. You want to be able to see what you have written if you were to take a step back.
4. Once you have all the words and phrases written down on individual post-it notes, find a large wall space and start to put post-it notes up on the wall, one-by-one. Group post-it notes together that have similar meaning and/or the words.
5. Once you have given every individual note a home, take a step back. What do you notice in the words on the wall?
6. Looking at the words written, write down that which falls into the following categories:
 - a. Core Values

b. Strengths

c. Skills and abilities

d. In what way have you made an impact

7. Drawing from these four areas, draft a first-run core purpose statement by stringing the above big ideas into a sentence or two.

Remember: This isn't chiseled in stone. The hope (and expectation) is that you will revisit this over and over again, as needed, and change as you grow and develop. This is simply the start!