

BUSINESS UPGRADE

21 days to reignite the
entrepreneurial spirit in
you and your team

RICHARD PARKES CORDOCK



CAPSTONE

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For my brother Mark –
a shining example of how to achieve results
against all odds

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This book is drawn from my experiences in my corporate days. I would therefore like to acknowledge and thank my numerous colleagues who I shared many happy experiences with.

Lastly, I must thank my family and friends who helped and encouraged me in writing this book. Special thanks to my parents (whose house we borrowed when I wrote this book) and my wife and daughter for their love and never ending support.

PREFACE

Business Upgrade is the natural follow-on from my first book, *Millionaire Upgrade*. Interestingly enough, it takes me back in time to my previous career when I worked for a large international software company. I spent many happy and relatively successful years working in that world, until one day when I was fired! It was not the last time in my career that I was fired; in fact, after completing my MBA (Masters of Business Administration) and taking another job in the software industry, it happened again! That's when I realized that the corporate world was not for me and that my future lay in becoming an entrepreneur. It turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to me.

It is only since starting my own business and studying in depth the inner thinking of successful entrepreneurs and their leadership styles and, most importantly, having had the benefit of selling products and services to my own customers, that I have been able to look again at my corporate days and realize what was missing – and what I believe many other people are missing too.

It was not long after completing my MBA that I researched and developed Millionaire MBA™ Business Mentoring Programme. I wanted to pass on the knowledge I had gained from real-life entrepreneurs, which is not taught at business school. It is from that base, and from my own previous experience in the corporate world, that *Business Upgrade* was written.

The story that follows – of Lucy being assigned to a special project within a large corporation – actually happened to

me. I spent over eight years working for the same software company until I became disillusioned and lost belief, but not before taking on a special project at HQ after our company had gone through a major merger and acquisition. During my years there, working predominantly in business consulting, I always felt I had two careers. The first took me into many different companies around the world where I met numerous people at all levels and saw how different companies were run and managed. My second 'career' involved studying in depth at a micro and macro level the company I had worked for over so many years. I had joined the company not long after it had been floated on the stock market, at a time when it was awash with cash. Like many newly-floated companies, it was ambitious in its growth plans but ultimately it struggled and stalled. This was chiefly because the entrepreneurial drive that had taken the company from a standing start to a large international organization was lost as wave after wave of new employees focused more on the share price value than on the customer. Millions of that newly acquired capital was wasted on prestigious corporate offices, large executive salary packages and luxury business travel, rather than investing in innovation, product development and building customer trust.

As a result of starting my own company and the research I have undertaken, I have been fortunate to meet many entrepreneurs and gain a clear understanding from them of what makes their companies so successful. Without a doubt, there is a 180 degree shift from the thinking of smaller entrepreneurial businesses to that of larger corporations. Some companies are able to continue growing from their entrepreneurial

roots: Richard Branson's Virgin group is an obvious example of a company that has managed this. Interestingly enough, so has General Electric, which was originally formed over 100 years ago by Thomas Edison, the inventor of the electric light bulb. GE is now one of the the largest companies in the world and still true to its entrepreneurial roots. It is no surprise that the principles set out in this book are consistent in all successful, innovative companies that see themselves as entrepreneurial thinkers rather than corporate bureaucracies.

Larger companies are often scared of the word 'entrepreneur', thinking that if employees are entrepreneurial thinkers they will run off and start their own businesses. In reality, all companies must be entrepreneurial in their thinking, because it was their very entrepreneurial thinking that made them great in the first place. It is only entrepreneurial thinking that can drive the change and innovation that will allow the business to compete in an ever-changing and more competitive global economy.

Companies that fail to see themselves as entrepreneurial will fail to keep pace with the constantly changing needs of their customers and ultimately will be overtaken by smaller, more nimble organizations who can meet the needs of customers. No large company is immune to this. Whenever you read this book, there will be examples in the newspapers of large corporate companies, who have stood the test of time for years, being threatened by smaller start-ups or other large organizations who are more entrepreneurial in their thinking and who welcome change and innovation.

It is often said that change, death and taxes are the only constants in life. Companies therefore need to embrace

change and not resist it. They need to understand the changing needs of their customers and listen to them, rather than dictate to them what they will buy. They need to understand the changing world and embrace the opportunity that this brings. Who better for large companies to learn from than the masters of change, innovation and opportunity – entrepreneurs!

Richard Parkes Cordock, June 2006

INTRODUCTION

Business Upgrade extends the thinking and concept of I BELIEVE, first introduced in *Millionaire Upgrade* and adds a further two principles of WE BELIEVE and THEY BELIEVE.

For a fuller insight into enterprise leadership and the philosophy of I BELIEVE, you will benefit from reading *Millionaire Upgrade*. Although these principles were written with the self-employed entrepreneur in mind, the ideas and thinking apply equally to larger organizations. When reading *Millionaire Upgrade*, please make the mental substitution of the word 'entrepreneur' with the word 'enterprise leader' – as it is enterprise leadership and thinking that is required in the corporate world. In many ways, the role of an enterprise leader within a larger organization is more challenging than that of an entrepreneur operating in the outside world – simply because the internal enterprise leader has more stubborn obstacles and challenges to overcome, namely co-workers, management and the company's resistance to change. Enterprise Leadership is about adopting a mindset focused on a common and collective goal, embracing change and innovation for a common purpose. Every one of us has the ability to inspire that change and innovation in our organization. Each of us can adopt the mindset of the enterprise leader. In doing so we are directly contributing to the company's inevitable success.

Whilst reading this book, I ask you to live and breathe these three key concepts:

- **I BELIEVE** – you, the leader
- **WE BELIEVE** – the team
- **THEY BELIEVE** – the customer

Business is all about belief and without the alignment of belief with the customer, the employees and the leadership of the company at all levels, from top to bottom, then success and growth will prove elusive. Every aspect of our lives, professional and personal, is built on belief and it is clear that by extension so too is your business!

DISCLAIMER

Amroze Technology, the organization featured in this book, is a purely fictional company and is the accumulation of my experience of the hundreds of companies I visited in my consulting career. In fact, Amroze is named after my daughter Amelia Rose and exists only within these pages. All the characters are fictitious and named mostly after friends and family. Any resemblance to any other company or person is purely coincidental and wholly unintentional.

PROLOGUE

It was Monday morning and Lucy was adding the finishing touches to the training pack she was putting together. The truth was she didn't really have enough to occupy her and that was a new experience for her. After four challenging years working in Amroze Technology's overseas offices she had been delighted to be recalled to Head Office, the nerve centre of the company, but for the past month she had been doing what she privately thought of as 'time-filler work'. It had been clear to her from day one of her return that no one really had a job for her yet so she had been given the task of developing a training programme for new graduate entrants. She had accepted the task with good grace, even though it hadn't taken her long to realise that Amroze hadn't recruited any new graduates in the last year and it didn't look likely that any would be coming along soon either, given the current problems in the company. It was just one of a number of signs she had seen that things were not going well, and in part she attributed that to the fact that between her recall and her arrival, the company had suffered a major blow. The CEO of just 18 months had suffered a second heart attack within a year, and although not immediately life threatening, he had taken it for the warning that it clearly was and had resigned due to ill health. The gossip in the company was that it was the huge stress and pressure he was under due to Amroze's problems in the market place that had brought on the second attack. The rumour mill had plenty to work with: the CEO had been faced with some serious problems over the last year. He, like a number of his predecessors over the last five years,

had failed to turn the fortunes of the ailing company around. It was obvious to everyone that sales had taken a serious nose dive and their customers were leaving them at an increasing rate.

Lucy was only too aware what this kind of pressure had done to the CEO's health. He had only managed a brief meeting with her on her arrival and within a couple of weeks he had stepped down due to ill health and left immediately. The board had been looking to appoint a successor ever since and it needed to be soon as the feeling in the building was one of stagnation; everyone was just waiting for something to happen. Lucy glanced at her calendar to check a meeting time for later that day and saw she had written 'new CEO appointed?' against today's date. According to Claire in reception there would be an announcement later today. Claire's information, as always well researched, was based on the fact that her friend Amy in the press office had been put on alert to put out an announcement to the media and internally throughout the company and to keep Monday morning clear for that. 'Well I hope it's somebody who is willing to shake the place up a bit and give me something real to do,' thought Lucy as she turned back again to the document that needed only a final checking before she would hand it over.

At that moment Claire was eyeing the middle-aged man who was waiting by her reception desk for the chairman's PA to come and collect him. Claire prided herself for being naturally in the front line for company gossip and as soon as he had announced himself as 'Stephen Fox to see the chairman' she had been gathering impressions to circulate through the grapevine. Any observations were cut short as the lift doors

opened and she saw it was the chairman himself, not his PA, who came to greet him. Now that was interesting, so it looked like the rumours were true. Claire had greeted all of the board members on their arrival that morning and she knew there were no absentees as there often were. She clearly heard the chairman saying 'Stephen we are delighted you have agreed to join us and I know the board is really looking forward to meeting you' as the lift doors closed on the two men. Claire thought: 'New CEO? Now that's interesting.' A little over an hour later she saw Stephen Fox coming out of the lift, looking very pleased with himself. He stopped by her desk and politely asked her if she could contact Lucy Robinson for him. Claire directed him to a visitor phone where she had Lucy waiting on the line and she heard him asking if Lucy was free for an early lunch. He obviously got the answer he wanted because he smiled and ended the call by saying he would wait in reception. He waved his thanks to Claire and then wandered over to the seating area and began making phone calls, which, try as she might, Claire couldn't quite hear.

