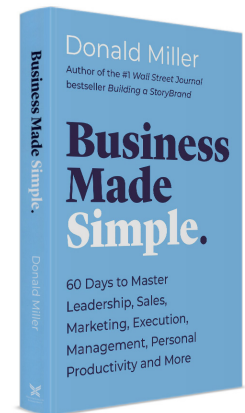


# Business Made Simple

60 Days to Master Leadership, Sales,  
Marketing, Execution, Management,  
Personal Productivity and More

by **Donald Miller**



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## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

*New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author Donald Miller knows that business is more than just a good idea made profitable; it's a system of unspoken rules, rarely taught by MBA schools. If you are attempting to profitably grow your business or career, you need elite business knowledge—knowledge that creates tangible value.

***Business Made Simple*** offers that knowledge, by teaching what it takes to grow your career and create a company that is healthy and profitable. It covers the key areas in which successful leaders and their businesses excel, such as character, leadership, messaging, management, execution, and more.

***Business Made Simple*** is the must-have guide for anyone who feels lost or overwhelmed by the modern business climate, even if they attended business school. Learn what the most successful business leaders have known for years, through the simple but effective secrets shared in this groundbreaking guide.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The qualities of good character that lead to success.
- The importance of reflection and prioritizing for your productivity.
- To create stories that cast your customer as the hero and you as the guide.
- The difference between management and execution—and strategies for succeeding at both.

### Introduction

Whether you work for yourself or work for a company, giving your customers or your boss an incredible return on their investment is the key to building your personal wealth. Each of us has to wake up in the morning and give people a return on the time, energy, and money they entrust to us.

This is the secret to success. How much more valuable would you be on the open market if you actually knew how to make a lot of money for a company?

Because so many of us have no practical, real-life, business education, we find ourselves secretly wondering if we have what it takes to do the job and are worried that any day we are going to be exposed as a fraud.

If you master the lessons introduced here, you will dramatically increase your personal worth on the open market. You will also become deadly at your job. Nobody will beat you.

What is your actual value as a working professional? Do you have the character traits and skill sets of a person who can offer extreme value to an organization? Use the following ideas, sampled and adapted from the book's 60-day framework, to transform your economic worth.

### The 10 Characteristics of a Value-Driven Professional

No core competency can overcome bad character. If we don't have good character, we are going to fail in business and in life. And we will never become value-driven professionals.

In the end, even if we can make a company money, we will likely lose them everything we made them if we lack character. For that reason, we are going to start with the character traits we need in order to add value to customers and the people we work with.

What follows are the characteristics that value-driven professionals have in common. The great thing about the 10 characteristics of a value-driven professional is they can be learned.

**1. Value-driven professionals see themselves as an economic product on the open market.** Most successful people are obsessed with getting people a strong return on the investment made in them.

**2. A value-driven professional sees himself as a hero, not a victim.** Competent professionals can deal

with any sort of challenge—even unfair challenges—and yet still find a way to win.

**3. A value-driven professional knows how to de-escalate drama.** The better you are at keeping your cool and helping others around you keep their cool, the more respected you will be and the more you will be chosen to move up.

**4. A value-driven professional knows feedback is a gift.** While it can often be hard to accept feedback, the ability to do so is the sign of maturity and will give you a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

**5. A value-driven professional knows the right way to engage in conflict.** Positive ambition will always meet resistance. Conflict-avoidant people are rarely chosen to lead.

**6. A value-driven professional wants to be trusted and respected more than they want to be liked.** What team members want most is clarity.

**7. A value-driven professional has a bias toward action.** They do not let ideas die on the vine. They take actions to make those ideas happen.

**8. A value-driven professional does not choose to be confused.** What masquerades as confusion is often our desire to avoid conflict and our un-willingness to take action.

**9. A value-driven professional is relentlessly optimistic.** The more relentlessly optimistic you are, the more you get to enjoy the rewards that come with trying.

**10. A value-driven professional has a growth mindset.** Stanford professor Carol Dweck found that people with a growth mindset believed their brains were adaptable and could get smarter. They were more willing to embrace challenges and did not see failure as a condemnation of their identity.

### Leadership Made Simple

#### How to Create a Mission Statement and Guiding Principles

Once you develop the character traits of a value-driven professional, you will be asked to lead. All good leaders are able to cast a vision that excites and unites a team.

Here is leadership in a nutshell: Invite a team into a story, explain why the story matters, and give every team member a role to play in the story.

If you want to be a value-driven professional, learn a daily routine that increases your output without increasing your anxiety.

All human beings long for a mission. We are all born self-identifying as heroes in a story, and we know, even as children, that our existence on this planet matters. A leader who can help a team define a mission and who can remind that team daily of what the mission is and why it matters is a valuable gift to their organization.

Here are the five components that make up a set of guiding principles. This set of guiding principles defines a mission that can be used to unite an entire company or a division.

**To unite and motivate a team, learn to write a mission statement that is short, interesting, and memorable.** It should explain what you are doing to serve people and why that effort matters. For example, for a software company, “Our software will run on half the computers in America by 2029 because nobody should have to suffer a software interface that confuses them.”

**Define the key characteristics you’ll need to develop in order to accomplish your mission, and you’ll transform yourself and your team.** Do you need to become faster, more attentive to customers, or better coders? If your mission is to create software that makes managing money easy, a key characteristic should be that your people are students of great software interfaces.

**Define three repeatable, critical actions every person in your organization can take that will contribute to your mission.** For instance, if one of our critical actions is to “have a stand-up meeting every morning 15 minutes before we open,” we will all get to work early and know what our priorities are when the doors open.

**Know how to attract people to your mission by telling your story.** When you tell your story, people decide whether or not to buy from you, invest in you, or even spread word about what you’re doing. In the most simple form of story structure, a story features a character who has been destabilized by an event and then overcomes a series of challenges to restabilize their life.

**Define the theme of your mission so you and your people will know why your work is important.** The

theme is the “why” of you or your organization. For a business, a theme can be anything from “nobody should have to pay too much for a new roof” to “every family deserves a vacation they will never forget.”

## Productivity Made Simple

Now that we’ve learned the character of a value-driven professional and how to unite and align a team, it’s time to learn how to manage ourselves and our time so we get the most done in the least amount of time and don’t burden ourselves with undue stress and anxiety.

If you want to be a value-driven professional, learn a daily routine that increases your output without increasing your anxiety. It’s a winning combination. And it’s not so hard to learn.

**A productive professional starts the day with reflection.** Every morning, ask yourself one simple question: “If this were the second time you were living this day, what would you do differently?” Then, we need to live in such a way that we won’t have regret. Those who do not reflect neither edit nor design—they simply respond.

**A value-driven professional knows how to prioritize their highest return opportunity.** What’s the most important thing you can do today? The reality is, not every unit of work gets the same return.

**A value-driven professional knows how to say “no” to distractions so they can say “yes” to priorities.** If we say “yes” to too many things, we are saying “no” to the deep and focused attention it takes to do a few things well.

**A value-driven professional knows how to block their time.** Bill Gates is never late to a meeting. When asked why, he said, “Because time is the one finite resource I can’t buy more of.” Time is like the multiple lanes of a freeway. Some lanes really do move faster than others. Blocking periods of time in which you cannot be distracted is the equivalent of getting into the fast lane and pressing the gas pedal.

After your morning ritual of reflection and committing to your highest priorities, continue to block your time for the rest of the day. In one-, two-, and three-hour chunks, you can accomplish a great deal.

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### Business Strategy Made Simple

#### How a Business Really Works and How to Keep It from Crashing

Regardless of whether you lead a team or not, your personal value as a professional will rise if you demonstrate a general understanding of how a business works. All businesses share a few important components. If you understand those components, you understand how to make a business healthy and profitable.

Using the analogy of an airplane, let's look at the parts of a business and how they fit together to make a healthy machine capable of lifting off the ground to travel far and fast.

**A value-driven professional knows a business works like an airplane.** There are five distinct parts that have to work together in order for the plane to fly. Each part will represent an aspect of your business. And each part has to be kept in proportion, or the business will crash.

**The body: overhead.** This includes salaries, medical benefits, rent, office supplies, and so on. These are necessary expenses because it takes people and supplies to solve customers' problems in exchange for revenue.

**The wings: products and services.** The wings of the airplane represent everything you sell. Think of the products you sell as the part of the plane that gives the airplane lift. Without profitable products to sell, no air (revenue) can lift the airplane off the ground.

**The right engine: marketing.** Without some kind of engine selling the products and propelling the plane forward, the wings cannot create lift. Some kind of marketing system or sales team needs to thrust the business forward and sell those products.

**The left engine: sales.** Your second engine is your sales effort. Your sales team brings in even more money so the business can afford to grow and scale.

**Fuel: capital and cash flow.** A business may glide a little when it runs out of cash, but eventually it will crash, and everybody onboard the body of the business will lose their livelihoods.

If the parts of an airplane are not in proportion to each other, the airplane will crash. Here are some things smart business leaders keep in mind as they run a company or a division of a company:

- They are resistant to adding costs (especially recurring costs) to overhead.
- They get daily or weekly reports that reveal whether marketing and sales efforts are performing effectively.
- They make sure the profit margins on the products they create are high enough to cover the overhead necessary to sell them.
- They are constantly increasing the efficiency of their production, sales, and marketing.

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### Messaging Made Simple

#### How (and Why) to Clarify Your Marketing Message

All of those projects we are working on won't go anywhere unless we can explain their importance to customers in a marketing message that attracts buyers. If you can clearly explain what sort of better life people get when they buy your product, you will sell more products.

**When clarifying your message, use the power of story.** The only tool that can stop people from daydreaming is story. When we start to hear a story, we stop daydreaming and pay attention. Story is that powerful.

Consider the following formula:

- A character that wants something.
- The character encounters a problem.
- The character meets the guide.
- The guide gives the hero a plan.
- The guide calls the hero to action.
- Define the stakes—success.
- Define the stakes—failure.

**When clarifying your marketing message, never position yourself as the hero. Always position yourself as the guide.** In stories, heroes are weak characters becoming strong. There is another character in most stories, though, who is already strong. The guide exists in the story to help the hero win. For this reason, whenever

we clarify our message, we want to position ourselves as the guide, not the hero.

**When clarifying your marketing message, know the problem is the hook.** Until the storyteller introduces the challenge the main character is up against, the audience sits wondering what the story is about.

**When clarifying your marketing message, define what action you want your audience to take.** In a good story, the guide must confidently ask the hero to take action or the hero will lose confidence and fail. Why? Because when the guide fails to confidently ask people to take action, the listener begins to doubt the guide's competence. Can you or can't you get the hero out of this predicament?

**When clarifying your message, be sure to define what's at stake.** What will people's lives look like if they engage the story you're inviting them into? What will people's lives look like if they don't engage in the story you're inviting them into?

A sales funnel earns trust and familiarity with customers, and it allows you to reach out to them and pivot your message.

## Marketing Made Simple

### How to Create a Sales Funnel That Converts Potential Customers into Buyers

Marketing isn't just about delivering messages to customers; it's also about delivering messages to co-workers, stakeholders, and even the press or media. A sales funnel is one of the simplest, most inexpensive, and yet effective marketing strategies you can implement. It's the foundation of any good marketing plan.

A sales funnel earns trust and familiarity with customers, and it allows you to reach out to them and pivot your message.

**A great marketer knows how to build a sales funnel.** All sales are relational. People hear commercial

messages about products and services all the time, but they mostly discard the information. That is, unless they hear about products and services from people or brands they trust. All relationships move through three stages: curiosity, enlightenment, and commitment. We must slowly, over time, pique our customer's curiosity, enlighten them about our product, and then ask them for a commitment.

**A great marketer knows how to craft a one-liner.** The first step to creating a relationship with a customer is to pique their curiosity. But how can we do that in one, simple sentence? A Marketing Made Simple one-liner has three components: a problem, your product as a solution, and the result.

**A great marketer knows how to wire-frame a website that passes the grunt test.** Most people do not read websites, they scan them. In order for a person to stop scanning a website and start reading it—to move from curiosity to a desire for enlightenment—you must further pique their curiosity by clearly communicating the answer to three critical questions: What do you offer? How will it make their life better? What do they need to do to buy it?

**A great marketer captures email addresses by offering free value.** Once you pique your customers' curiosity with your one-liner and your website, you can begin to enlighten them using a lead generator. The key is to offer tangible, free value in exchange for a potential customer's contact information.

**A great marketer builds relationships and closes the sale with an email campaign.** After offering a lead generator, craft as many valuable emails as you can, and stay in touch with your customers. Offer recipes, study guides, DIY tips, perspectives on ideas, whatever you think will serve your customers' concerns and interests. When you stay in touch with your customers by sending them valuable emails, they trust you. And when they trust you, they commit and place orders.

## Communication Made Simple

### How to Become an Exceptional Communicator

Whether you're leading a meeting, launching an initiative, giving a keynote address, or even hosting a webinar, any professional who can keep a room's attention while giving a speech is going to be given more responsibility and more pay. A good communicator is going to be chosen to lead.

When we apply the elements of a good story to a presentation, we get the same result the writers of blockbuster movies get: an engaged and inspired audience.

Consider these five questions:

- What problem are you going to help the audience solve? An audience will not be interested in your presentation until they know you are going to do one thing: Help them solve a problem.
- What is your solution to the problem?
- What will their life look like if they take you up on your solution? A great communicator tells the audience what their lives could look like by foreshadowing a climactic scene. A good story is always headed somewhere, and usually that somewhere has been foreshadowed early enough in the story that the audience knows exactly what they want to happen.
- What do you want the audience to do next? A great communicator includes a strong call to action in their presentation. The main reason you want to include a call to action is because, in general, people do not take action unless they are challenged to take action. In stories, heroes must be forced to take action by some kind of inciting incident. Their dog has been kidnapped, or their husband has been turned into a werewolf!
- What do you want the audience to remember? When you realize the theme of your presentation, make it your last line. You want your theme to be the idea your audience walks away remembering forever.

## Sales Made Simple

Regardless of whether you run the company or mow the lawn, every professional dramatically increases their value to an organization if they understand how to sell.

Selling is really about clearly explaining to a person how your product or service can solve their problem and then guiding them through a process that leads them to make a purchase.

A good salesperson works within a framework that invites a customer into a story in which they solve a problem and feel good about themselves in the process. A good salesperson makes the customer the hero and helps the hero win the day.

**Cast the right characters. Qualify the lead.** When selling, you are inviting a character into a story in which their problem gets solved and they are transformed into a better,

more fully equipped version of themselves. This means, however, that not every character is right for the part.

In sales, this is called qualifying the lead. Does the customer have the problem the product solves? Can the customer afford to buy the solution? Does the customer have the authority to buy the product?

**Introduce your qualified leads to the story arc your product or service makes possible.** In order for your qualified leads to get interested in stepping into that story, you simply need to lay the story out for them. To create a custom story arc for every one of your clients, you will want to use this formula:

- “I see you are struggling with X problem.”
- “I see that X problem is causing Y frustration.”
- “Our product or service resolves Y frustration by resolving X problem.”
- “We’ve worked with hundreds of clients with X problems, and here are their results.”
- “Let’s create a step-by-step plan so your problem and frustration get resolved.”

**Play the guide and know your lines.** What does a guide do? Well, as it relates to selling, a guide does three things: reminds the hero what the story is about; gives the hero a plan to resolve their problem and win the day; foreshadows the climactic scene of the story. The key to inviting customers into a story is to figure out the talking points that define the story and then repeat them in lunch meetings, emails, proposals, phone calls, and more.

## Negotiation Made Simple

Anytime you find yourself in strategic communication in order to win a deal or resolve a problem, you are in a negotiation. A good negotiator can make or save a company millions each year. Therefore, any team member who understands a negotiation framework dramatically increases their value inside an organization.

**A good negotiator understands the two different kinds of negotiations, collaborative and competitive.**

A win/lose mode of negotiation is called competitive while a win/win mode is called collaborative. A general rule about negotiation is that if one party is competitive and the other party is collaborative, the competitive negotiation technique is going to win and the collaborative will lose. Nearly always.

We trust professional leaders for two reasons:  
They know what they are doing and can help the team win,  
and they care about each individual on the team.

If you are in a collaborative negotiation mode and you sense the person you are negotiating with is in a competitive mode, you should switch to competitive immediately. Why? Because they are not looking for a win/win, and in order to create a win/win scenario, you need for them to join you.

**A good negotiator goes below the line.** Not all negotiations are rational. Human beings are complex, and often emotional issues come into play during a negotiation. People are motivated by many things, not just money. As you negotiate, ask yourself what other factors could be in play. Does the seller want the car to go to somebody who will love it and take care of it the way she did? If you're the buyer who will take good care of that car, make sure to spell out how you're going to continue the tradition.

**A good negotiator anchors the negotiation with the initial offer.** Anchoring the negotiation means that you've placed a number on the table that you want the rest of the negotiation to gravitate around. When you are able to make the opening offer, you, from that point on, set the gravitational anchor for the rest of the conversation. This is a strategic advantage.

**A good negotiator diversifies their interests to avoid being emotionally hooked.** We've all been in negotiations where we find ourselves wanting whatever it is we are negotiating for a little too much. This is a bad place to be in a negotiation. But what do we do when we are overcome with emotion? One good tactic is to find another alternative and split our interests so that we aren't so easily carried away.

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## Management Made Simple

Let's add even more value by talking about something most of us have to do every day: manage people. Management is all about helping other people win so the overall team can win.

We trust professional leaders for two reasons: They know what they are doing and can help the team win, and they care about each individual on the team.

**A great manager establishes clear priorities.** By deciding what your priorities are, you are defining for yourself and every member of your team a focus. Nobody can read their manager's mind. The manager must tell the team, nearly every day, what their focus should be.

**Identify the key performance indicators you will measure.** Once we define what our department produces, we must measure the factors that lead to the production of that output. By deciding what to measure, we tell ourselves and the members of our teams what specific routine tasks are important. In the end, knowing what specific, repeatable tasks a team member is responsible for adds to clarity—and remember, clarity from a manager leads to trust and respect.

**Create processes that increase the activity-to-output ratio.** The difference between a value-driven professional and an average team member is that the value-driven professional is going to think creatively about improving the performance of the machine. But how do you make the machine that is your department more efficient? Simply ask the question, "How could we make this better?"

**Give valuable feedback early and often.** A good manager knows that their people are their most valuable asset, and while they work to create a better and better machine, they treat the people who build that machine with great care. The proper care of people, in a professional setting, involves letting them know how they are doing as members of the team. And this involves praise and constructive feedback. The key to giving good feedback is to always, always be *for* the team member you are instructing.

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## Execution Made Simple

Without an execution system, team members work in a fog. A value-driven professional who can instill and manage an execution system lifts the fog and brings the light.

If Management Made Simple is the design of a process that creates the profitable output of products and services, Execution Made Simple is how you manage the repeatable (and relational) exchanges involved in those processes.

Here are the steps to the Execution Made Simple framework:

**Hold a launch meeting to launch a project or initiative.** Do not trust your gut or your instincts as to how to accomplish the tasks. Instead, follow a careful checklist along with a few routine processes to ensure the project gets done and gets done on time. The first thing you want to do at your launch meeting is to fill out a “project scope” worksheet. This will guide you to set a clear view of success, assign the leaders, identify resources needed, and create a timeline with key milestones.

**Have each team member fill out a “one-pager.”** No matter how successful your initial meeting went, the fog of fuzzy priorities will come for you and your team, and its one goal is to keep you from getting the job done. A one-pager is intentionally simple. You and your team members will simply review the “clear view of success” determined during the launch meeting, then list the top five priorities for each department and the top five personal priorities for each individual.

**Hold weekly “speed checks.”** Think of a speed check as not unlike a huddle in a football game. This is not a strategy session. This is a quick meeting to make sure everybody on the team knows the play and their specific role in the play. Answer the questions, “What has each team member gotten done?” “What is each team member going to do next?” and “What’s blocking any team members from making progress?”

**Keep score and measure your success.** There is nothing you can do to boost morale and energize a team more than to have everybody on that team understand the rules of the game, feel that they are being coached to victory, and have proof of their progress on a public scoreboard. For

example, how many sales calls was each person on the sales team expected to make this week and how did they do?

**Celebrate your team’s victories.** Celebrating an individual’s win is how you let them know they’ve changed, that they’ve become more competent and capable. Celebrating wins is a critical and necessary routine if we want to develop our people. Notice them, memorialize them, and acknowledge those responsible.

You’ve now learned some of the very basics that it takes to become a value-driven professional. If you want to become an even better value-driven professional, start the process over and do it all again. The more you affirm what you’ve learned, the more economic value you will have on the open market.

You are what the market has been awaiting for a long time. Now let’s put this knowledge to work solving the world’s problems.

### IF YOU LIKED THIS SUMMARY, YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE:

- *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful* by Marshall Goldsmith
- *48 Days To the Work You Love: Preparing for the New Normal* by Dan Miller



Donald Miller has helped more than 50,000 businesses clarify their marketing messages so their companies grow. He’s the CEO of Business Made Simple, the host of the Business Made Simple podcast, and the author of several books, including the best-sellers *Building a StoryBrand* and *Marketing Made Simple*.

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