



7 Powerful Principles to Bring ZEN to Your **BUSINESS**

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Introduction: Calling all Business Leaders



IMAGE: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/ancient-architecture-asia-bench-301614/>

You're running a business. On your own or with a team. You may be doing well financially, or maybe not.

But you have a feeling something's not quite right.

The joy and enthusiasm with which you started your business has now faded and you're feeling stuck.

Maybe when that alarm clock goes off on a monday morning, you're filled with dread. Your business feels like just another job, except rather than being 9am - 5pm, with your smartphone at hand, it's more like 5am to 9pm...and weekends too!

If this sounds like you, or if your instinct tells you, you need a bit more zen in your business, you've come to the right place.

Here's the 7 principles of Zen of Business. Read through them, and consider taking one or all of the actions recommended.

Principle 1 - Start with Why



IMAGE: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/young-woman-thinking-with-pen-while-working-studying-at-her-desk-6384>

You probably think people are interested in what you sell. Your product or service. Amazingly, this isn't completely true.

People don't buy what you sell, they buy why you sell it.

And your 'why' is linked to who *you* are and what *you* stand for.

Apple computer is a great example. Their most successful campaign didn't show a single computer. Instead, they showed quotes of great thinkers with the strap line 'Think Different'.

Popularity of their computers grew not because of the size of their computer's hard drive or the gigabytes of this or megabytes of that! It grew because Apple stood for something inspiring.

But we think you can do even better!

You can stand for something that tangibly makes the world a better place.

So, what does your business stand for?

We recommend your personal values line up with your business values.

For example, Shamash's business trains mindfulness teachers. His values are awareness, compassion and wisdom. So Shamash's business is about creating a more mindful, kind and wise world. And we then reinvest by offering scholarships to people in third world countries to spread the values there too.

Yvonne's coaches businesses and entrepreneurs. She believes in positive social change, community and zen. But she also believes everyone has the capacity to do business in a better way.

So Yvonne chooses to work with businesses who want to improve how they work and are willing to make changes to their own business practice as well as in the in community at large.

Take Action

Consider how you wish to improve your business and create a better world. Then, do it. How? One way is by ensuring your business goals aligns with that mission. Write down your three core values and pick at least one to align with your business.

Principle 2 - Find The Space to Lead



IMAGE: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/trees-in-park-257360/>

Have you ever tried riding a bike and looking down at the front wheel? As a child, Shamash did that once and went straight into the back of a parked car! Crash! Not cool.

To lead a company you need to be aware of the path right in front of you, of course. But you also need to look far ahead to determine which direction you go.

To do this, you need space - mental space. One way to achieve this is to spend some days away from your company and ask yourself where you'd like to be in a few years time.

For example, Shamash is writing this ebook after being away on a retreat centre deep in the English countryside for a week. The time away from his daily emails, texts and calls and meetings has given him the opportunity to reflect on what he wishes to focus on in the coming year ahead. He decided this program is one of those priorities, hence this little book!

The very concept of this project and program grew because Yvonne had taken time off to reflect on a retreat. This led her to meet Shamash, and the rest is history!

If you feel you can't take a week off away from your business, your business is too focused on you personal time. You need to find better ways to delegate your work. That needs to be your priority.

Take Action

Block out anything between a couple of day up to a week in your diary, every quarter ideally, to step back and see the big picture. Have the courage to ask yourself the big questions. Make sure you put those dates in the diary now, otherwise it won't happen!

Principle 3 - Use Your Unique Talent Every Day



IMAGE: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/adult-business-choices-choosing-515169/>

This is an obvious point often forgotten in business and in life. I believe everyone is talented at something.

For example, when Yvonne first started her business, she was good designing textiles, but she was really great at sales! When she hired other designers to create textiles for her, she could go out there and secure more sales. That was better for everyone. She employed other designers and the business grew.

Work towards making 100% of your time on your talent. So if it's securing sales, focus on that. If it's teaching a skill, focus on that. Make it your mission to find someone

whose talent is production or admin or whatever else. Such people do exist! And when they do this work, it makes them feel great too. This is team work!

Here's some common excuses and answers to them too.

Reason 1: I can't afford to hire someone.

A: First of all, calculate how much your time is worth. Let's say it's 30 pounds an hour. Then spending 15 pounds an hour hiring an admin staff is a worthwhile investment. You actually save money! If you can't even afford that, look into cheaper options online, and start with hiring someone for just an hour or two a week if necessary. Or you may even find a volunteer to help you. Volunteering is good for their emotional wellbeing and good for you too! A win-win. Also, consider trading skills too!

Reason 2: I don't trust anyone to do the job as well as I can.

A: Find someone who can do the job at least 80% as well as you. Learn to trust them. Allow them to make mistakes and learn from them. Focus on what they're doing well and praise them for that instead of just focusing on weaknesses.

Take Action

Make a list of all the activities you do for your business that you don't enjoy, and isn't your talent or ability. Making a list helps massively to gain the clarity. Then make it your number one priority to find people who would love to do that work for you.

Who could you contact right now to get the ball rolling?

Principle 4 - Be Mindful to Enhance All Areas of Business



Image: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/amazing-balance-blur-boulder-312839/>

Mindfulness. A very popular term nowadays. Mindfulness is about cultivating a present-moment awareness. How is this helpful in business?

Research shows the average person spends only about 47% of their waking time in the present moment. The rest of the time their minds wander. But that's not all. The same Harvard study found the more people's minds wandered, the unhappier they were.

This is most likely due to the negativity bias - the human brain's natural tendency to dwell on the negative experiences of life.

We've met highly successful entrepreneurs, even billionaires, and one of their traits is often presence. They are fully listening to whatever people are saying to them.

As a business leader, the more fully aware you are of how people are doing, at all levels of the organisation, the better able you are to have the necessary information to make good decisions.

For example, when Yvonne was managing a large Art School, she often spent time talking to her cleaning staff first thing in the morning. Listening to them made them feel valued and she got a sense of how they perceived things to be going in the college. These insights were used to inform some of the management thinking.

Mindfulness isn't just about being aware of other people either. You also need to be more aware of your inner world of thoughts and emotions. Are you hungry, tired, irritable or energetic - this can help you know if you're in the right state of mind to make important decisions or if you need to go for a walk around the block to clear your head.

Take Action

The simplest way is to just make a commitment to be more present to your surroundings. Switch off your phone on the bus and connect with your senses. Be aware of nature when taking your dog for a walk. Take time to consciously breathe when sitting on a train.

Want to go further?

Take 10 minutes every morning to do something very few people do nowadays - do nothing! Well, almost nothing. Just be aware of your body and your breathing. And notice how your mind wanders and naturally comes back. That's mindfulness meditation.

Yvonne found when she was running a busy organisation, people wanted to grab her as soon as she stepped into the office. So she had to make sure she did her mindfulness before getting to work.

Super tip - Meditate in your favourite chair or cushion - make it personal treat rather than a chore.

Principle 5 - Be Generous: Aim to Offer 10x More Value Than People Pay



IMAGE: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/adult-birthday-birthday-gift-box-360624/>

Zen of Business is about generosity.

Offer greater value. How valuable is your product or service? Business is about creating value for your customers. And the more valuable you make it, the more satisfied your customers will be.

For example, one of Shamash's programs sells for £1000. So he offer additional services for free so customers actually receive more like a £10,000 service.

He's what he offers on top.

- All the slides
- Lots of guided mp3s
- Transcripts
- Private Facebook group for students
- Private Facebook group for all graduates
- Detailed project feedback
- Big discounts for future courses that they book
- Lifetime recordings of sessions
- Ongoing telephone customer support

And it goes on!

Think about what you could offer.

Take Action

Take all of your products or services and add even more value without raising the price. This will not only result in more sales, but you'll feel prouder about your offer and want to share it more too.

Bonus tip - Be careful not to overwhelm customers with too many features in your advertising. People like simplicity. For example, discount store Aldi doesn't offer millions of products - just the basic ones that most people need. Simplicity lies at the heart of the philosophy of their business. That's Zen of Business thinking!

Principle 6 - Make the Right Choices with Greater Wisdom



IMAGE; <https://www.pexels.com/photo/food-healthy-people-woman-41219/>

This is a big one. Wisdom. Do you feel like you're bringing a sense of wisdom in your decisions at your business. Or are you making snap judgments and fire-fighting your way through?

Think of a wise person. How do they behave? How do they spend their time? What do they focus on?

I personally think of someone like the Dalai Lama. I read his latest book called 'The Book of Joy'. I was reminded of the huge challenges he faced personally - being taken from his parents at a young age, made head of state, and then having to flee from his own country and living as a refugee in india for so many years. He often has to hear harrowing tales of his people suffering through torture.

Yet, he remains both caring and joyous. How and why? One of his secrets is to take a wider perspective so that he can be of better service to others, rather than just sitting in doom and gloom.

You're not alone in your business and life challenges, whatever they may be. Learn how to see things from a different angle.

Take Action

Consider a challenge you're going through in your business. Now ask yourself: will this make a difference in 1 year, 10 years or 100 years? Probably not much. And are there others going through similar challenges that have survived? Probably yes! Finally, consider what opportunities this challenge offers you too. This gives a much more balanced outlook.

Bonus tip - Most entrepreneurs focus on their failures. What they didn't get done. Flip it! Spend every morning or evening writing down your 'wins'. You'll feel more positive and energised. And you'll get more done too.

Principle 7 - Build an Organisation That Lasts with Greater Compassion



Image: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/people-sitting-on-green-grass-130111/>

The root meaning of the word compassion literally means 'to suffer with'.

More specifically, compassion is about being aware of someone's suffering and if possible, taking action to reduce that suffering.

'What's that got to do with business?!' you may wonder. Everything actually.

Your role as a business leader is to listen to the challenges your staff and customers are going through and reduce them as much as possible.

If a staff member is going through a personal problem, just listen.

Listening fully is transformative. They feel valued. That's compassion in action.

If a customer has gone through a recent loss, and you send a bunch of flowers, that's being kind. The favour will come back to you somehow - don't worry about that. Focus on the kindness.

In Pali, an ancient language, the word 'dukkha' which means suffering, is also the axle hole that isn't quite round - giving an uncomfortable, bumpy ride. A sense of dissatisfaction arises.

'Sukha' is the opposite. Sukha means happiness, and also represents a smooth axle hole.

So with more compassion in your business, you'll find the things move more easily. The axles in the wheels will turn more smoothly.

Take Action

Take time to listen non-judgmentally everywhere - including your staff members.

Ask them what's on their mind and just listen. Notice your urges to speak, and practice letting them go. A sign that your listening skills are improving, is if they speak to you more often.

Bonus Principle 8: Simplify Your Business with Constraints

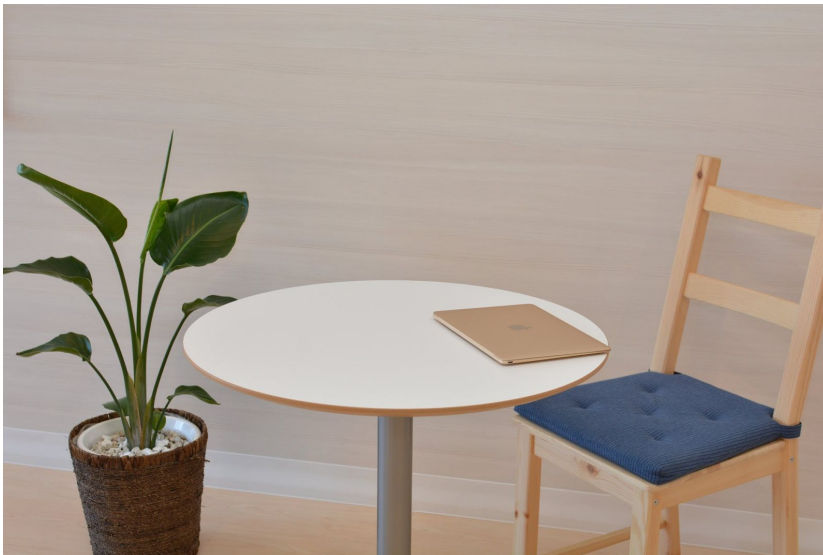


IMAGE: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/architecture-chair-color-decoration-280471/>

This is a powerful and counterintuitive principle.

When you think about Zen, you probably think about a sense of simplicity.

And at their core, all businesses are very simple.

As a business leader, your role is to focus on the the most important goals. The most important tasks. And the most important outcomes - meaningful outcomes.

If you just dive in and do everything, you'll immediately be overwhelmed and find yourself gasping for air. There's no need to do that.

For example, if you decided that a new service for your customers is your highest priority, you may decide:

1. What date is my deadline to launch the service (e.g. this Friday)
2. How much money is in my budget to market the service (e.g. £300 a month)

3. How will I measure success (e.g. number of bookings for the service or enquiries)

In this way, you can work on one project at a time, rather than getting overwhelmed with too many projects and priorities.

Note that you want to keep your time constraints short and your budgets limited. Through this process, you'll make sure you don't spend £1000s (or with corporates, it can run into £millions) on an idea that sinks rather than swims.

Always do small tests of your idea. Spend a small amount of time. If that works, go ahead and increase spending if it's viable...don't be scared of holding back at this point!

Take Action

Here's what you need to do:

1. Be clear what your business is about, using principles 1 and 2.
2. Decide your most important focus for this month.
3. Put in constraints of time, money and resources to turn that project into a reality.

Your Next Step

If you're like to discover many more principles and actions you can take to transform your business and life:

1. [Sign up for our Training Course](#) - Join our 6 session, in-person training program, working with Yvonne, Shamash and a community of like-minded businesses. Next one start in London, UK in March 2018.
2. [Visit the Zen of Business website](#)
3. [Listen to our Zen of Business Podcast](#)