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BEFORE YOU TAKE MY ADVICE

The businesses I've built,
the mistakes I've made and
the experiences behind what I teach.

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A Note From Andrew.

You should be skeptical about who you take business advice from.

Lots of experts teach business without ever doing the hard work or carrying the full weight of it themselves.

They have never had their house, income, reputation and family's future tied to whether or not the business succeeds.

They have never employed a large team, managed cash flow under pressure, dealt with a partnership that was not working or gone home knowing that dozens of families depended on the decisions they made.

They may understand the theory. That does not necessarily mean they understand what it feels like.

Before you take my advice, you have every right to ask whether I have earned the right to give it.

That is why this short book exists.

It is not designed to convince you that I have done everything perfectly. I haven't.

It is not a polished success story that skips over the mistakes, pressure and decisions that did not work. Those experiences are a large part of why I can help other business owners today.



This is simply where I started, what I built, what I learned and why ARC Business Development exists.

You can then decide for yourself whether I am someone worth listening to.

PART ONE: WHERE IT ALL STARTED

CHAPTER 1

I Was Never the Obvious Business Coach

I left school at the end of Year 10.

English was not a strong subject for me. I was practical. I liked working with my hands, solving problems and seeing a result at the end of the day.

In 2000, I began an apprenticeship in air conditioning and refrigeration.

I worked hard, learned the trade and progressed. But eventually I hit a ceiling. I could not see a meaningful pathway forward.

I wanted the opportunity to earn more, take greater responsibility, move into a more senior position and potentially buy into the company.

I was offered a supervisory role but was denied a 50c per-hour pay rise.

That moment wasn't the only reason I decided to start my own business, but it made the situation very clear.

I wanted more control over my future, and nobody else was going to give it to me.

And, I was also a 25 year old bloke who simply wanted to make more money.

Whilst I already understood that money alone wouldn't create happiness, I knew money could create security, experiences, time and choice.

And, if I wanted those things, I needed to take responsibility for creating them.

In 2009, I started Valley Air Conditioning. I didn't know how far it would grow, how much it would test me or how completely it would change who I became.

The First Philosophy Taking Shape:

At the time, I would not have expressed it in these words, but the principle was already shaping my thinking:

"If nothing changes, nothing changes."

I reached a pivotal moment in my life and had to choose: I could play it safe. Stay where I was and accept that nothing was likely to change, or I could start my own business.

The second option came with far more risk, responsibility and uncertainty, but it also gave me an opportunity to grow, revolve and build a future on my terms.

So, I chose to change something.

That decision became the starting point for everything that followed.

CHAPTER 2

The Office Beside the Kitchen

“Most successful looking businesses begin in a way that is neither successful looking nor impressive.”

Valley Air Conditioning began from our first small home.

We had a landline, a fax machine and an old entertainment unit chopped down and repurposed as a desk beside the kitchen.

That was the “office”.

My wife handled the “office stuff,” and I was the entire field team.

In the beginning, our lanes were clear. I completed the work, and she supported the administration behind it.

Then as the business grew, our roles changed. As our family grew (we had children), needs at home changed. The separation between business life and family life became harder to maintain and balance.

Eventually, we made the decision for my wife to exit the business.

At first glance, removing someone you trust (and who supports you 100%) from a growing business may not sound like a good decision.



My wife, who was “my second brain”, was all over it when it came to the admin side of the business, now had a different order of priorities.

Her top priority was no longer the business but our kids. Our family. Which meant things were being missed at work. This would then lead to arguments at home and put stress on our relationship.

We had to decide what mattered most.

What we were – and what we were not – willing to sacrifice.

It remains to this day, one of the best decisions we made for our relationship, our family and the business.

It also taught me something I hadn't realised:

“Success is personal.”



A decision can look successful financially and still be wrong for the people living with its consequences.

The business should support the life and relationships you want. The people closest to you should not permanently carry the cost of your ambition.

This did not mean success became easy. I still worked crazy hard, made sacrifices and dealt with financial pressures.

All the same things you are going through from broken bones coming off motorbikes and then not being able to work to relationship challenges, team problems, call backs, the list could go on for ever.

But I began to understand that the goal was not simply to grow a business.

The goal was to build the right business for the life we wanted.

This later became another core ARC philosophy:

“The business is the vehicle, not the destination.”

I did not understand the full significance of that idea while working from the tiny office. I learned it progressively through the years and decisions that followed.

CHAPTER 3

Growth Was Never A Straight Line

“I learned as much from the business and partnership that did not work as I did from the ones that succeeded.”

It was not a direct, smooth path from the kitchen office to the \$10 million result.

It would be dishonest of me to suggest that the journey didn't come with great challenges, hard lessons, and some real "what the hell am I doing/is this all worth it?" moments that tested not just me but my wife and family too.

There were multiple businesses, partnerships, mistakes, buyouts, difficult conversations and lessons I could not have learned from a text book that shaped and changed me along the way.

Valley Electrical

A couple of years after starting Valley Air Conditioning, I launched Valley Electrical with a 50:50 partner.

Without going into the specifics, the partnership did not work out and I eventually sold my half to the other partner, and we went our separate ways.

That experience taught me significant lessons about aligned values, team,

culture, shared brands and the effect one business or partner can have on another business's reputation.

A partnership can look right commercially while being wrong personally or culturally. And when your business, brands and reputations are connected, misalignment in one area can have consequences far beyond the partnership itself.

Valley Painting & Maintenance

While still involved with Valley Electrical, I co-founded Valley Painting & Maintenance with two equal partners.

Over the next 5 years, we grew the company, built a team of 15 and established an excellent reputation within the industry. By many measures, the business was successful.

But success doesn't mean everyone wants the same thing next. And it became clear that we had different goals. No one was right or wrong. We had simply reached a point where our futures were no longer aligned.

We structured a buyout. The other two partners and the company continued, and the habits and fundamentals established during those early years helped it keep thriving.

That experience reinforced something I believe every business owner should consider, especially when going into business with others: Goals aren't a conversation you have once. People change. Circumstances change. Goals change.

Having honest conversations about what you each want personally and professionally, and revisiting them regularly, can prevent changing ambitions from becoming unnecessary conflict.

New Edge Electrical

After Valley Electrical and while I was still involved with Valley Painting & Maintenance, I started New Edge Electrical with another partner.

We grew the business together, but over time it became clear that business ownership wasn't where my partner was at his best. I eventually purchased his shares, and he moved into a mining role that made him much happier.

That experience was an important reminder: being highly skilled at your trade doesn't automatically mean you'll enjoy, or even want, everything that comes with owning and growing a business. They often require very different skills, responsibilities and mindsets.

Later, a driven young electrician joined New Edge Electrical. He took on increasing responsibility and eventually became a partner in the business.

He wanted to challenge himself by running the company independently, so he purchased my shares and became the sole owner. The business went on to thrive across NSW and Queensland.

It was the same business with a different person at the wheel and a completely different outcome.

I had now seen that the growth of a business is closely connected to the growth of the person leading it. Your technical ability might help you build a great product, or deliver an exceptional service, but becoming a business owner requires you to keep developing beyond your trade.

This became evidence for a belief that has stayed with me ever since:

"As the business owner evolves, so does the business."



The Lesson Behind Some of the Businesses

I do not share these businesses to make the story sound impressive. I share them because each one taught me something I couldn't learn from a textbook.

They exposed me to different industries, partners, personalities, team dynamics, business structures and stages of growth. I experienced what happens when people are aligned, and what happens when they aren't.

I saw businesses thrive, partnerships end and good decisions sit alongside decisions I would make differently today.

Some lessons came through success. Others cost me time, money and energy.

But every experience added another piece to my understanding of how businesses, and the people behind them, actually work.

Looking back I can see that I wasn't simply building businesses. The businesses were building me.

They forced me to question what I thought I knew, develop new skills and become a better leader.



PART TWO: PUTTING RUNS ON THE BOARD

CHAPTER 4

From the Kitchen to More Than \$10 Million

“The result people see is usually built on years of decisions, mistakes and work they never saw.”

After dividing my attention across several businesses for around five years, I learned that's not always the best approach.

The growth I achieved in another business could have happened faster and easier in the core business if I'd just stayed focused and didn't divide my attention.

I returned my full focus back to the core business Valley Air Conditioning.

What followed was a significant period of growth.

The business grew at approximately 150% year-on-year and moved into another stage entirely.

We developed a team of more than fifty people with structure across general management, sales, finance, administration, service management, leading hands and warehousing.

Annual revenue grew beyond \$10 million and we moved into a purpose-designed facility built for the company.

We also received industry recognition, including an award with TECO in Taiwan and Fujitsu NSW and National Dealer of the Year awards.

I was proud of those milestones. But with every new level of growth came a new level of complexity.

I began to realise that the skills that had helped me build the business were no longer enough to lead it.

Being a good technician wasn't enough. Working longer hours wasn't enough. And being the person everyone relied on to solve every problem was no longer something to be proud of, it was becoming a constraint on the business.

If Valley Air Conditioning was going to keep growing, I had to change the way I operated.

I had to understand the financials at a deeper level, develop managers, clarify roles, build meaningful reporting, create accountability, improve our meetings and document the systems that had previously lived in my head.



Perhaps hardest of all, I had to learn to trust other people to make decisions without me. It taught me something I now see in business owners all the time:

The habits that help you build a business can eventually become the habits that prevent it from growing beyond you.

At some point, working harder stops being the solution. The business needs something different from you.

“Working harder got me there. Becoming a better business owner allowed the business to go further.”

And that distinction, between doing more and becoming more capable as an owner, became one of the most important lessons of my business journey.

The Wholesale Business

I later identified a market opportunity and started a wholesale company.

By then, I had made plenty of mistakes, learned some hard lessons and had years of business experience. That can create confidence, but it can also create the dangerous belief that you now know what you are doing.

I brought in two partners, each with a 10% share, including the General Manager. With a team of five, the business grew rapidly and within its first eighteen months, we achieved approximately \$900,000 in sales in a single month.

We had ambitious plans to scale nationally. But rapid growth attracts attention, and not all of it is helpful.

As we expanded, we encountered industry politics and resistance from established players that we hadn't fully anticipated. It forced us to reconsider whether pushing harder, growing faster and challenging everyone at once was actually the smartest path forward.

Eventually, I bought back the partners' shares and operated the wholesale company at a consistent level alongside Valley Air Conditioning.

Earlier in my business journey, I probably would have viewed slowing the growth of a company as a failure. By this stage, I understood that growth for growth's sake wasn't necessarily success.

A big revenue number can look impressive from the outside. But revenue alone tells you very little about the health of a business.

It doesn't tell you about profitability, cash flow, risk, pressure on the team or the demands being placed on the owner.

Most importantly, it doesn't tell you whether the business you're building is actually creating the life and future you want.

What the Numbers Do and Do Not Prove

The numbers demonstrate that I have built, scaled, structured and sold good businesses.

But they don't mean I always had the answer. Far from it.

What those numbers really prove is that I stayed in the arena long enough to learn.

I made mistakes. I adjusted. I developed new skills. I sought better answers. And when the business reached a new stage, I worked to become the owner that stage required.

That distinction matters because there is a danger that comes with experience and success: you can start believing you've figured it all out.

I haven't.

Business continues to change. People change. Markets change. And the moment you decide you already know enough is often the moment you stop evolving.

One principle has remained important throughout my journey:

“Never think you know it all and stop learning”.



CHAPTER 5

Learning What I Did Not Know

“Experience teaches powerful lessons, but only if you are willing to reflect, learn and grow instead of repeatedly defending what you already believe.”

As the businesses grew, I became increasingly committed to developing my own capability.

I read every business and leadership book I could find.

For someone who left school after Year 10 and never considered English one of my strengths, that was outside my comfort zone. I was not, and still am not, a fast reader.

So I adapted.

Wherever possible, I used audiobooks. I refused to let the method of learning become an excuse not to learn.

The books gave me language, frameworks and perspectives. Experience allowed me to test those ideas against reality.

I could reflect on what I had done well, recognise what I had misunderstood and strengthen the businesses with better decisions.

Business coaching also became a turning point for me.

It showed me the value of an outside perspective, honest accountability and having someone challenge the thinking behind a decision, not just the decision itself.

That experience changed the way I approached business, and eventually, the way I helped other business owners.

Over time, I began coaching and mentoring other owners one-on-one, speaking on stages and facilitating mastermind groups.

As I listened to their challenges, I started recognising many of the same patterns I had experienced myself. Different businesses. Different industries. Different people. But often, the same underlying challenges.

I was not teaching theory I had memorised. I was translating what I had learned through building businesses, employing people, navigating partnerships and living with the consequences of my decisions.

This is where **Better Thinking. Better Business. Better Life.** began taking deeper shape.

Better thinking improved the decisions.

Better decisions, repeated consistently, build stronger businesses.

Stronger businesses created more choices. More freedom. More opportunities. Greater control over the life you want to build.

The progression was never perfect or complete. I am still learning and evolving today.

"I do not expect a business owner to be perfect. I expect them to remain honest, responsible and willing to improve."



CHAPTER 6

The Biggest Test of the Business

“A business that only works when the owner is present has not yet created genuine choice.”

Valley Air Conditioning eventually reached a point where I wanted to test everything we had built.

Could the structure, systems, processes and leadership team operate the business without me?

At the same time, I had a personal goal I had carried with me for years.

I wanted to travel around Australia with my family while I was still young enough to enjoy fishing and exploring remote locations, and before the children reached high school.

In 2021, we left.

The management team ran Valley Air Conditioning.

That was the ultimate practical test of what we had built. The business was no longer entirely dependent on me, and that gave us something I had spent years working towards: choice.

It was also a deeply personal turning point.

The trip created space away from the routine and identity I had built around business. Some of the lessons and personal growth were unexpected and uncomfortable, but necessary.

I reconsidered what genuinely mattered to me. I did not return as the same person who left.

When we came home, I had to acknowledge something that was difficult to admit: my heart was no longer in the businesses in the same way. That was confronting. I had invested years of my life building. Those years were enormous amounts of work, sacrifice, learning and identity.

But staying, purely because of the past, would have been another version of being trapped.

I made the decision to sell Valley Air Conditioning and the wholesale company together.

By that point I had achieved my overarching major personal goal of being able to retire at 40 years old, if I chose to, and never need to work again.

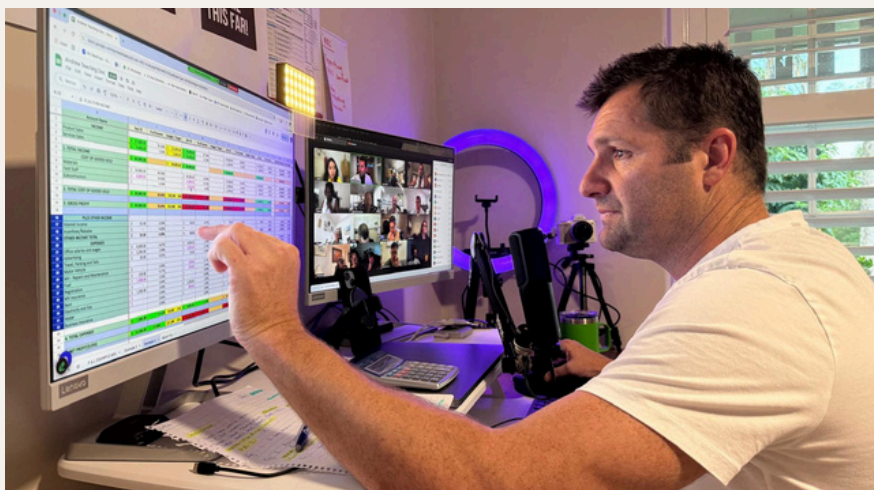


But then a bigger question quickly arrived:

“What do I do with everything I have learned?”

Walking away and doing nothing with those lessons didn't feel like the right next chapter.

That question led me directly to ARC.



PART THREE: WHY ARC EXISTS

CHAPTER 7

Reverse-Engineering What Actually Worked

“Once the businesses were sold, I could finally see the patterns more clearly.”

I had worked with hundreds of team members and personalities across multiple businesses.

I had experienced startups, scale, partnerships, buyouts, rapid growth, external disruption, management structure and eventual sale.

Some decisions had created remarkable results. Others had created expensive lessons.

I began reverse-engineering the experience.

What had consistently worked?

What had failed?

Which lessons applied only to one situation, and which principles appeared across every healthy business?

That process became ARC’s 10 Fundamentals of Business:

1. Personal and Professional Goals
2. The 12-Month Business Plan
3. Financials and Budgets
4. Execution Framework
5. Sales and Lead Generation
6. Systems and Processes
7. Service Fulfilment
8. People and Team Management
9. Reporting and Accountability
10. Elevating Your Mindset

I then spent three years applying and further stress-testing the framework through direct one-on-one consulting across multiple industries.

Then an additional 3 years in groups and online programs.

The businesses were different, but the underlying patterns repeatedly appeared.

An owner without clear personal goals could spend years building a business that was in conflict with the life they wanted.

A plan without execution remained an intention.

Growth without financial visibility could hide serious problems.

People without clear outcomes and accountability produced inconsistency.

Systems without leadership were often ignored.

And the owner's thinking, habits and decisions influenced everything downstream.

The details changed from business to business, but the fundamentals kept showing up.

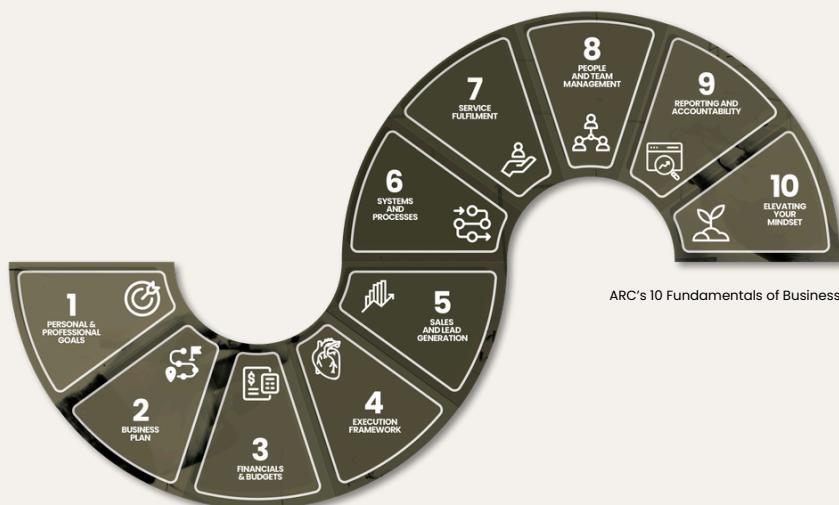
The 10 Fundamentals weren't invented in a workshop to create a coaching product to sell.

They were extracted from years of building and running businesses, then challenged, applied and refined through real businesses.

That shaped what I wanted ARC to become.

Most business owners don't need another person giving them more information to consume. There is already an overwhelming amount of business advice available. What is much harder is knowing what matters most right now, what to do next and how to turn that knowledge into consistent action.

I want to give people practical tools, a clear path and the right support to help business owners take action and build a business that genuinely supports where they want to go.



CHAPTER 8

What I Believe About Business

“The way I coach comes directly from the way I learned to build businesses and create change.”

The following philosophies are now central to ARC.

They were not all clear to me when I began. They became clear through living them.

Success Is Personal.

The biggest business is not automatically the best business. The right business depends on what the owner wants it to provide.

That might mean escaping serious financial pressure, repairing damaged relationships and regaining control.

It may mean building a highly profitable company, working three-and-a-half days each week, creating stable employment, travelling more or pursuing significant scale.

Nobody else can define the right result for you.

The Business Is the Vehicle, Not the Destination.

The business should help create the life, security, contribution and choices you want.

If the business grows while your health, relationships and life deteriorate, the result deserves honest examination.

The vehicle still needs to be healthy, profitable and capable. But it should be built for the journey you have deliberately chosen.

As the Business Owner Evolves, So Does the Business.

Every stage, and every business, required something different from me. The technician who started Valley Air Conditioning was never going to be capable of leading a \$10 million company without changing.

The business exposed where I needed to develop.

That remains true for every owner.

Better Thinking. Better Business. Better Life.

Every meaningful change begins upstream.

Better questions create better thinking. Better thinking creates better decisions and behaviours. Repeated consistently, those decisions create a better business.

A better business becomes more capable of supporting a better life.

If Nothing Changes, Nothing Changes.

Knowledge is not change.

Intention is not change.

Planning is not change.

Change appears in the decisions, conversations and actions you repeatedly follow through on.

The Place Where You Normally Stop.

“The place where you normally stop may be the exact place where your next stage of growth begins.”

I have experienced this personally, and I see it repeatedly in business owners.

The difficult conversation is postponed. The plan is abandoned when operations become busy. The numbers are avoided when they become uncomfortable. A new idea replaces the priority that became difficult.

Growth often begins when you recognise that familiar stopping point and decide it will only be a pause and then continue differently.

CHAPTER 9

What You Can Expect From Me

“I will care about you and your result, but I will not tell you that change is easy or do your part for you.”

I am not the right guide for everybody.

I work best with good people who take responsibility, value others and are prepared to do the work.

I do not respect blame, excuses, dishonesty, arrogance or treating people poorly.

I believe business owners deserve my empathy because I understand the pressure they carry.

But empathy without honesty does not help anybody change.

My role is to listen, understand what is really happening, challenge the thinking that may be keeping the owner stuck and help identify what matters most.

ARC then provides practical tools, a clear path and the appropriate support and guidance.

The owner remains responsible for taking action.

“We provide the tools, pathways and support. You take the action and create lasting change.”

I will not pretend there is one formula that makes business easy.

I will not define your success for you.

I will not encourage endless growth if it creates the wrong business and life.

I will share what I know, be honest about what I see and expect you to follow through on what you say matters.

That is how I have built businesses.

That is how I have learned.

And that is how I teach.



CLOSING

Should You Listen To Me?

You can make that decision for yourself.

I left school after Year 10 and began as an air conditioning and refrigeration apprentice.

I built, co-founded and successfully exited multiple companies.

I experienced partnerships that succeeded, partnerships that ended and buyouts on both sides.

I worked with and without my wife in the business.

I built a business capable of operating under management while my family travelled around Australia.

I sold the businesses and reverse-engineered the experience into The 10 Fundamentals, then continued stress-testing them through years of direct consulting.

Those are the runs on the board.

But the reason I may be worth listening to is not that everything went right.

It is that enough went right and enough went wrong for me to understand the difference between an idea that sounds good and a principle that survives contact with a real business.

I know what it feels like to carry the responsibility.

I also know what becomes possible and what life you can have, when the owner evolves and builds the business deliberately.

ARC exists because it would feel like a disservice to keep those lessons to myself when they can help good business owners create better businesses, better lives and have a positive effect on their families, employees, customers and communities.

If this story has helped you understand who I am, why I teach what I teach, and you want to know more, go to our website www.arcbusinessdevelopment.com.au and have a look around at what we do.

Also download our book "If Nothing Changes Nothing Changes" from the resources page.

You can choose the next resource that is most useful for where you are now, or I'm happy to jump on a quick call if you have any questions you can't find the answers to.

No pressure. No complicated pathway.

Just take the next step that helps you think better, build a better business and create a better life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, stylized 'A' and 'R' followed by a horizontal line.