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WHAT GOT YOU HERE WON'T GET YOU THERE . . . THANK GOODNESS!

It's true—what got you here won't get you there.

In fact, in so many instances, it's amazing that we got "here" at all.

That's because for so many, the "baggage" they've been carrying has more than weighed them down; the wonderful dreams they had when they started their firms simply have not materialized. In fact, their dreams have become nightmares.

The dreams they had of creating a business that people *love* to buy from, *love* to work for, really *respect,* and love to *refer* others to just evaporated. Not in the proverbial "puff of smoke" but in a whole lot of practices that locked them into becoming so much less than they could have been.

A business that they set up to bring them joy now brings them stress. A business they dreamed of as great for the family many times destroys the family. A business where they thought they'd love every customer has turned into one where the customer is a number and an interruption to their day as opposed to the reason for their day. A business they dreamed of where they had teams of people truly energized and connected turned into a nightmare where people have more (not less) mental pressures.

And in some businesses, that pressure of forcing people to account for every minute of their time in six-minute units is (at last!) recognized as a source of harm, not of life. I remember well the CEO of a mental health organization commenting on the rapid increase in people coming to them from professional firms. "We need to realize that forcing people to account for their time in six-minute units is actually coming close to killing them," she said.

Once we get that, as in really "get" it, surely all we need to say is, "Enough is enough." That alone surely trumps any argument you could muster to defend the process.

As you'll discover moving forward, the goal—some would say the only goal—is to enrich lives. And our goal here really is to do just that.

Here we bring together all the insights and passion we can muster to reverse those outdated and unnecessary processes for you by giving you new ways of seeing and thinking about things. Behaviors, we're told, always follow thoughts. So here we're investing time together to change up thoughts first before we get to behaviors.

But, it's not just about the words and thoughts in this book. To put it nicely, coming on this journey with us takes courage. To put it less nicely, it takes guts.

It takes the guts to come out and be bold. And guts are what the owners of the Vancouver, Canada–based law firm of Miller Titerle have a lot of. I first came across them in 2017 when I was speaking at a professional firm's conference in Tokyo.

In preparing to speak, I checked out the names of firms that were coming. And, rather naturally, I went to their websites to see how they were positioning themselves. I could not believe what I was seeing (and still am!) at www.millertiterle.com.
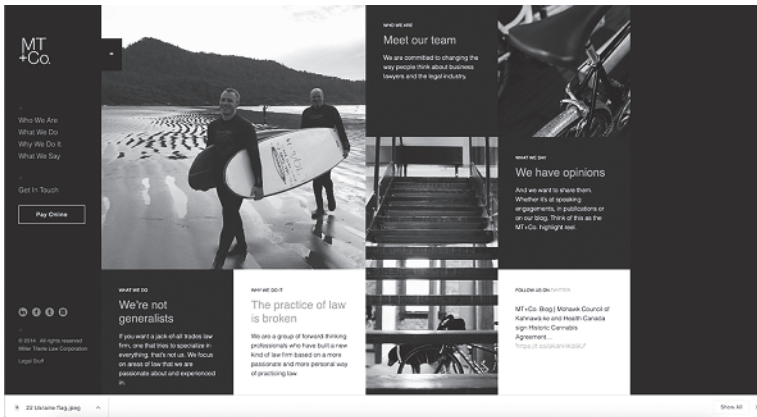
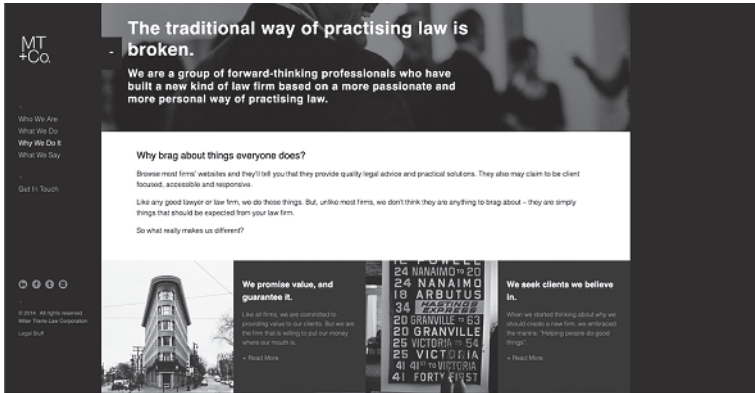Take a look Figure 1.1.

FIGURE 1.1

FIGURE 1.2

And focus, if you will, on the pure guts of the statement underneath the surfboard: "The practice of law is broken.'

And at the risk of taking you away from the pages of this book for a moment, take a look at what happens when you click on that statement. Studying the picture below saves you a click. Here's where you get to Figure 1.2.

We could spend an entire chapter on this site alone (do this later, click on the "Meet the Team" link and get some real surprises as you scroll down)—make sure you note "Norman the Dog"—but for now just look at this sequence on that page above:

> Why brag about things that everyone does?
>
> Browse most firms' websites and they'll tell you that they provide quality legal advice and practical solutions. They may also claim to be client-focused, accessible, and responsible.
>
> Like any good lawyer or law firm, we do these things. But unlike most firms, we don't think they're anything to brag about—they are the things that should be expected from your law firm.

Put all of that another way, those things they mention here are just table stakes.

Like MT+, this book is more than just being about "table stakes."

This is very much a "looking forward" book in the sense that the pictures we paint, the examples we give you, the stories we sculpt for you lead to great outcomes for you and the customers you're privileged to serve.

That's partly because we see professional knowledge firms in all their shapes and sizes as central to businesses of all shapes and sizes. And for "central" read "absolute necessities."

Let's just take two prime examples: accounting firms and legal firms.

First let's look at accounting firms. Here's a simple truth—most (and it's most by a huge margin) businesses simply do not understand numbers, financial numbers, in the way they need to grow their businesses in both revenue and profit. So the knowledge and the skill sets you have quite literally change lives. Be very clear—that is the potential you have. It's the potential you can (we would say "must') realize.

And with legal firms in mind, in this ever-more-regulated world, errors and omissions in things like privacy laws can (and do) put businesses out of business. Stopping that changes lives. Again, that's the potential you have.

To repeat a phrase we coined in 1994, firms need to move beyond reporting on history to helping their selected customers create history. Be very clear on that—that is precisely what you can do.

Doing it requires you to be at the forefront of innovation, pushing performance in every aspect, all the way from hiring to firing and everything in between. And increasingly, "everything in between" refers to the way your firm uses (and indeed develops) technology.

Ryan Lazanis, who we quoted in the Preface, put it like this in a conversation recently:

> *Up until now, accountants have been using existing technology to automate their firms and automate work for their clients. But now, we're seeing accountants getting into the software development game, where they're actually building custom automation tools for their clients and they're either up-skilling or hiring developers in-house. It's the next frontier, which will certainly intensify.*

Add to that the truly fascinating and game-changing possibilities of Web 3.0 and you see how Barry Melancon's comments from the Preface are so right on point.

Do note this though—it's not technology to "replace" you—it's technology to enhance the human-to-human relationships you have—to allow your firm to bring humanity back to the very core of your business model. We really do need humanity to be the focus.

Companies really are getting that at last. Take the technology firm Sage as one example. They've now changed their brand focus from the classic B2B (the acronym for business-to-business) to "human-to-human."

One of the technology firms I mentor has recently moved its classification from the normal SaaS—(Software as a Service) phrasing—to the much more powerful TaaS. And we love what that acronym stands for: "Transformation as a Service."

Just consider that oh-so-subtle shift for a moment. When you're branded as a "Software as a Service" company, you and your team members could easily consider that your job is done when you deliver the software.

But when you really understand the shift to "Transformation as a Service," your job is effectively never done. You develop a powerful partnership-type relationship that clearly focuses on outCOMES—the transformation of your customers' business through an ongoing relationship.

That transition is the central theme of this book.

Let's be clear here, too—our role here is *not* to focus on technology per se—that's a way to very quickly date a book.

Our role is to impact you, to move you and to add process and structure to the way you think, the way you frame challenges and the way you partner with others in finding not just solutions but new potentials.

Part of my role in that "shifting-thinking" piece has been to convince firms that they need to do two critical things in a standout way:

1. They need to build companies that matter—as in *really* matter—to the customers they're privileged to serve.
2. They need to build companies that those self-same customers feel that they "belong" to as well.

One way to do that is to think about companies who start by thinking about how they can eliminate the "pain points" of doing business within a particular sector. They seek to disrupt by focusing on the "pain" of doing business with the "standard" way of doing things.

In his *Atomic Habits* book, author James Clear gives us a great example of that thinking in a downloadable Addendum to his widely

read book. He asks us to think about the first ride-sharing services like Uber or Lyft:

> *Just imagine if you were in the room as they were planning the launch.*
>
> *Together you could have mapped out the chain of behaviors a customer had to perform to get a ride across town: walk outside, wait for a taxi to pass on the street, get in, ride across town, arrive at destination, pull out a credit card or cash, pay for the ride, put the credit card (or any change) back in their purse or wallet, get out of the car, etc. (Clear 2018)*
>
> *And then together with your colleagues you could look at each stage and ask yourselves how you could reduce the friction (the pain) associated with the task (or eliminate that step entirely).*

Here's how James Clear explains the process by posing a series of questions and possible answers:

How can we make it easier to walk outside? What if users could download an app that would summon a car from their phone and didn't have to walk outside at all?

How can we make it easier to wait for the ride? What if we told users how long it would be until a ride arrived? Then they could just walk outside at the right moment.

How can we make it easier to get in the car? No change.

How can we make it easier to ride across town? Rather than leave it up to the driver's memory, we could display the route on the users phone and the driver's phone. Now the user can make suggestions if they want to go a different way, and the driver can rely on the GPS for up-to-date information and routing.

How can we make it easier to pay for the ride? We already have an app on the user's phone. What if we asked users to upload their credit card information? Then, they could pay automatically and just exit the car once they arrive. (Clear 2018)

Simple. It's a great example of the truth of this phrase: "Questions change the future before the answers even arrive."

Jonas Salk, the discoverer of the first successful polio vaccine, put the same thought this way, "What people think of at the moment of discovery is really the discovery of the question."

We wonder what questions you'd pose to do that. Actually, we'll be doing a lot of "question-posing" moving forward, too.

And as Clear writes in Chapter 12 of *Atomic Habits,* "Business is a never-ending quest to deliver the same result in an easier fashion."

That's true. But, as we've said, there's so much more to it than that. Or, as we put it in this chapter heading: "What got you here won't get you there."

And it was with that spirit in mind when (in April 2019) I met with Ron in Chicago. I remember Ron being so excited, inasmuch as it was the first time he was going to present his ideas on the *subscription economy* to a group of people who knew him well.

It was amazing to be a part of it. And it was the first time I'd heard Ron use this phrase:

> *Moving to the subscription economy means we have to learn not to monetize the transaction but rather to monetize the relationship.*

Such a powerful thought.

You see, you may think that moving to the subscription economy requires simply a pricing decision.

It is much, much more. It's a complete re-look at (and in some cases, a complete re-do of) your current business model.

Let's look at Ron's phrase once again to emphasize the point:

> *Moving to the subscription economy means we have to learn not to monetize the transaction but rather to monetize the relationship.*

Here's the key: You can only do that when (notice *when* as opposed to *if*) you do several key things:

- Do stuff that really matters to the people you're privileged to serve.
- Do it in a way where it becomes "sticky"—where the relationship is so locked into the customers' well-being they're simply not going to go anywhere else—they feel "this is the place I really belong" or, as Seth Godin so beautifully puts it, "People like us do things like this."

- Do it in a way that underscores that you and your team care deeply—very deeply—about the customer.

- Have a vision (what Stephen Covey famously described as a "North Star") that is valuable enough to your customers that they can easily justify a recurring payment commitment to you.

- Have clear criteria on what customers you want and, perhaps even more importantly, customers you will not accept.

And if you'd like to take that caring piece even further (why not?), consider what loyalty-guru Fred Reichheld had to say in an interview with John Abraham of Medallia in March 2022: "Every company should be looking at Customer LOVE as their purpose. Not just because it's good for customers but it seems like it's the only way to provide a wonderful job, a meaningful career for employees and it's the only way to deliver outstanding long-term value to investors."

Then he added this seriously powerful point: "If you don't exist to make a customer's life better, I don't think as a business that you have a legitimate reason to exist."

Be clear on this—the subscription model we're outlining here specifically does that—it focuses you on making the lives of your customers better. Indeed, it forces you to do that. It really is potential realized.

It's no longer about transactions. It's about a deep relationship that enriches you, your team, AND the lives of your customers and their teams.

Be aware of this too—this is NOT some Pollyanna "customer-is-always-right" philosophy. Far from it. You need to bear in mind that a profitable relationship with your customer comes from challenging them and not just having what might be called a cozy relationship with them.

The relationship here is more like us having the friend who tells us things we need to hear rather than the things we want to hear. It's you seeing a greater potential in your customers' businesses than even they do. And it's you working together with them to make sure that happens—to make sure that is, in fact, the outcome. Just consider what you need to do to make that the reality.

One way to do that is to realize that it needs you and your team to create (not just to tell, but to create) a brand-new story.

We begin that story over the page . . ..