

# THE *Bluffer's*<sup>®</sup> GUIDE TO

# YOUR OWN BUSINESS

THE  
5 MILLION  
COPY  
BESTSELLING  
SERIES



NEW EDITION

THE *Bluffer's*<sup>®</sup> GUIDE TO

---

YOUR OWN  
**BUSINESS**

---



John Winterson Richards

Edited by  
Thomas Drewry



Colette House  
52-55 Piccadilly  
London W1J 0DX  
United Kingdom

Email: [info@bluffers.com](mailto:info@bluffers.com)  
Website: [bluffers.com](http://bluffers.com)  
Twitter: @BluffersGuide

First published 1992  
This edition published 2013  
Copyright © Bluffer's® 2013

Publisher: Thomas Drewry  
Publishing Director: Brooke McDonald

Series Editor: David Allsop  
Design and Illustration: Jim Shannon

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Bluffer's®.

A CIP Catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Bluffer's Guide®, Bluffer's® and Bluff Your Way® are registered trademarks.

ISBN: 978-1-909365-48-3 (print)  
978-1-909365-49-0 (ePub)  
978-1-909365-50-6 (Kindle)

# CONTENTS

The Mission	5
The Pro-Am Reality of Business	7
The Basic Role Models	13
The Best-laid Plans...	19
Starting Up	37
A Matter of Identity	45
Marketing and Operations	57
The Three Burdens of Business	69
People You Cannot Avoid	81
People You Can Emulate	87
Glossary	98



Where an amateur bluffs only for slight social advantage, the bluffer in business will stake everything – money, home, family, future – on his or her abilities.

---

# THE MISSION

**S**ooner or later the true bluffer will end up heading his or her own business.

There are two reasons for this:

1. For the compulsive bluffer, your own business is the only game in town. Where an amateur bluffs only for slight social advantage, the bluffer in business will stake everything – money, home, family, future – on his or her abilities.
2. Your own business is the bluffer's home ground. Here, at last, for reasons that will soon be explained, is an activity where the art of bluffing is not merely a useful yet optional extra, but the decisive factor that determines success or failure. Your own business is 99% bluff (opinions differ about what exactly constitutes the other 1%).

The precarious path to running your own successful business is perilous territory, which is where this short guide can offer invaluable help. It sets out to conduct you through the main danger zones encountered in

discussions about business, and to equip you with a vocabulary and evasive technique that will minimise your risk of being rumbled as a bluffer, and might even allow you to be accepted as a business owner of rare ability and experience. But it will do more. It will give you the tools to impress legions of marvelling listeners with your knowledge and insight – without anyone discovering that, until you read it, you probably didn't know the difference between a SWOT and a USP.

# THE PRO-AM REALITY OF BUSINESS

## PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS BLUFFERS

Of course, your own business will inevitably start off small. No bluffer particularly wants to head a small business. He or she would probably prefer to own a big business. Alas, it is a great social injustice that few are able to go straight in at their preferred level. For most, the best way to own a big business is to start with a small one and make it bigger. And the best way of doing that is to convince everyone that the small business is already a big business.

In fact, if a small business is to stand any chance at all, it is not merely desirable but essential that it appears to be what it hopes to become.

The beginning of business wisdom is this: no matter how much people profess to admire them, everyone hates small businesses. This is because:

- Customers feel safer buying from the firms everyone else buys from.
- Suppliers are reluctant to grant easy credit terms to those who are less likely to buy regularly or in bulk.

- Taxmen and other bureaucrats enjoy picking on those who cannot afford the top-division advisers they fear.
- Bankers consider debt-laden governments who regularly default on large loans to be better credit risks than small businesses who miss a single interest payment after years of impeccable financial management.
- Other small businesses resent those who do better than themselves and develop a fine sense of superiority over those who are below them, however slightly.

There is a vicious circle: no one really trusts a small business, so no one gives it a chance, so it remains a small business. To break the circle, everyone must believe that it:

1. has been established for longer than it really is;
2. is stronger financially than it really is; and
3. is bigger than it really is.

## **THE AMATEUR GAME**

The first step in learning to bluff in business is to learn how to spot a bad bluffer. As with most things, there are two reasons for this:

1. Most of the people anyone in business will have to deal with are themselves in business. Although relatively few have studied the art of bluffing, most are experienced enough to realise that their businesses depend on it, and are quite capable of humiliating a would-be professional who underestimates them.

2. It is essential to learn how not to do it. The wise bluffer learns from the mistakes of others.

The amateur has grasped that it is essential to pretend that one's business is more substantial than it actually is. Fortunately for the professional, the amateur always makes the same mistake: the overbluff.

The overbluff is best diagnosed as the condition of trying too hard to impress. Symptoms include:

- a) shameless name-dropping;
- b) drawing attention to expensive trappings – suit, car, office, etc. (Beware of lines like: 'Sorry, I left my Vertu Diamond smartphone in my Gucci briefcase in the Aston.');
- c) boasting about successful business deals, however trivial.

The last is the fatal mark of the amateur. Whenever you hear such boasting, you may draw two conclusions:

1. If one makes a big thing out of a little success, it is a sign that such success is rare, and greater success is unknown. Boasting is a tell-tale sign of insecurity.
2. If one boasts whenever one has a success, it follows that the absence of a boast is a clear indication of the absence of success, so a boaster who falls silent, even for a moment, is presumed dead.

Similarly, those who boast about how busy they are only

make it obvious how unusual it is for them. In general, the harder one tries to impress, the more obvious it is that one is desperate.

You should compare the boaster with the real thing, the truly successful entrepreneur. Indeed, before going into business, you would do well to study the manner of those who have achieved what you aspire to.

A successful entrepreneur is so used to hard work, expensive possessions and meeting powerful people that they no longer seem worth talking about. He or she may enjoy so many successes that boasting becomes pointless, even tiresome. In fact, the wealthy entrepreneur will try to avoid attracting gold-diggers and time-wasters (i.e., the taxman



You need to convey not merely that you are successful but that you are successful and modest. The key is subtlety.

---

and other entrepreneurs) and, being already established, will feel no need to impress anyone for commercial reasons.

Observe this and learn:

- a) Never refer to famous people ostentatiously by their first names. The most effective way to name-drop is to use both first name and surname together, especially when talking of someone whose personal name is not generally used, in the middle of a list of more obscure

names – made up if necessary – in the same form and delivered in exactly the same tone. It implies you are no more impressed with the great one than you are by other personal acquaintances, or that you know other people who are just as important but whose importance is only appreciated by a select few, including yourself.

- b) Don't draw attention to your possessions. Those who are impressed with such things will have made a mental inventory before you can open your mouth, and they will be even more impressed if you appear to take it all for granted.
- c) Don't mention business success. If the subject is raised, hint that your successes are too many and too commonplace to be discussed in detail.

You need to convey not merely that you are successful but that you are successful and modest. The key is subtlety.