

THE MONEY-SMART BUSINESS OWNER

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO BUILDING, PROTECTING, AND GROWING WEALTH

By Starkel Wealth Advisors

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PAGE 1 — INTRODUCTION

Most business owners work hard to grow revenue...

but very few build true personal wealth from their business.

This guide shows you the exact frameworks used by financially successful entrepreneurs — the ones who retire earlier, reduce stress, and turn their business into a lasting wealth engine.

What you'll learn:

- How business owners accidentally sabotage their own wealth
- A simple framework to pay yourself correctly
- How to separate business money from personal money
- How to build a long-term wealth plan that doesn't depend on selling the business
- The 7 habits of financially elite entrepreneurs

Let's get to work.



PAGE 2 — THE #1 WEALTH MISTAKE BUSINESS OWNERS MAKE

They treat the business as the retirement plan.

But here's the truth:

Your business is an income engine.

not a guarantee.

Markets change. Industries shift. Buyers disappear.



Smart owners build two things:

1. A profitable business
2. A separate, growing personal wealth portfolio

If all your wealth lives inside your business, your risk is concentrated and your exit timeline controls you.





PAGE 3 — THE MONEY-SMART FRAMEWORK

A simple model every business owner needs:

1. Business Cash Flow System

- Pay yourself a predictable salary
- Maintain a healthy operating buffer
- Stop using the business account as your personal ATM

2. Personal Wealth System

- Automated investing
- Tax-efficient buckets
- Long-term planning
- Protection (insurance, legal, risk management)

3. Exit & Succession Prep

- Know your number
- Clean bookkeeping
- Reduce key-person risk
- Build transferable processes



You don't need perfection — just direction.



PAGE 4 — HOW TO PAY YOURSELF THE SMART WAY

Business owners often pay themselves based on emotions:

"I'll take more when things feel good."

"I'll take less because I'm nervous."

Instead, use the 3-Tier Pay Structure:

Tier 1: Base Salary

Predictable, consistent.

Covers your family's lifestyle needs.

Tier 2: Owner Distributions

Quarterly or monthly.

Based on profits, not mood.

Tier 3: Strategic Investments

A portion of extra profits goes directly into:

- Brokerage accounts
- Retirement accounts
- Real estate
- Tax-efficient investment buckets
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This structure separates you from the business — the foundation of real wealth.



PAGE 5 — THE BUSINESS OWNER WEALTH BUCKETS

To protect yourself from volatility, use a three-bucket structure:

Bucket 1:

Safety Cash reserves

6–12 months operating buffer

Emergency fund (personal)

Bucket 2:

Growth Long-term investments

Retirement accounts

Wealth portfolio outside your business

Bucket 3:

Opportunity Funds for:

- acquisitions
- marketing pushes
- hiring
- equipment
- real estate for the business

When each bucket has a job, your financial life becomes organized and predictable.





PAGE 6 — TAX EFFICIENCY FOR BUSINESS OWNERS

You don't need loopholes — just a system.
Smart owners use:

- Retirement contributions (Solo 401(k), SEP IRA, Traditional/Roth, etc.)
- Accountable plan reimbursements
- S-Corp salary + distributions structure where appropriate
- Medical reimbursement and HSA strategies
- Depreciation planning for equipment or office space

These aren't "tax tricks."

They're standard tools — when used correctly — that help business owners keep more of what they earn.



PAGE 7 — PROTECTING YOUR WEALTH

You're the engine of the business.
Protect the engine.

At minimum, review:

- Key Person plan
- Buy/Sell (if partners exist)
- Disability income protection
- Liability structure
- Emergency reserve
- Cyber and data protection

Your family and business should never collapse because of one gap.



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PAGE 8 — THE 7 HABITS OF MONEY-SMART ENTREPRENEURS

1. Automate investing like a non-negotiable bill
2. Know their numbers weekly
3. Keep business + personal money separate
4. Build wealth outside the business
5. Reinvest strategically, not emotionally
6. Have an exit plan, even if they aren't selling
7. Surround themselves with advisors, not cheerleaders



PAGE 9 — YOUR NEXT STEP

You don't have to do everything at once.

Just start with ONE step:

- Clean up how you pay yourself
- Set automations
- Build your buckets
- Map out your personal wealth plan
- Review your risk protection

If you want help building this entire system for your business, schedule a conversation:

Starkel Wealth Advisors

Helping business owners build real wealth — not just revenue.



Questions?

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