

Are you building your business  
or putting out fires?

## STOP PUTTING OUT FIRES

4 Strategies To Eliminate Daily Problems So You  
Can Focus On Business Growth

*Service business owners face numerous challenges every single day. In this report, you'll read about 4 practical strategies you can implement immediately to navigate the complexities of any challenge and eliminate that problem or challenge in your business.*

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# About The Author

## Mike Agugliaro Business Warrior

For more than two decades, as the co-owner of New Jersey's largest and respected home services company, Gold Medal Service, Mike has played a key role in building Gold Medal's success. In the last 10 years, Mike's business-growing acumen has taken the company from a business making less than \$1 million a year -- to making more than \$24 million a year. Through his varied experiences -- including founder of CEO Warrior, author of "The Secrets of Business Mastery", speaker and publisher of Home ServiceMax magazine -- he's been successful mentoring and creating profitable business models and actionable processes for other businesses, both small and large. His goal is to dig deep and find a company's sweet spot -- through his management, operations, sales, marketing, goal-setting, communication, and personal coaching skills.



**BOOK: The Secrets Of Business Mastery:** Build Wealth, Freedom and Market Domination For Your Service Business in 12 Months or Less. A chapter-by-chapter collection of best business practices, tools and strategies for service business owners. [Available on Amazon](#)

**BOOK: Secrets of Leadership Mastery:** 22 Powerful Keys To Unlock Your Team's Potential and Get Better Results: 22 powerful keys to help you create a culture where you build and lead a hardworking team of superstars, inspire them to give their very best, and generate measurable results. [Available on Amazon](#)

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**MAGAZINE: Home ServiceMax Magazine:** Written by and for peers in the residential home service industry, this magazine provides insight into marketing, finance, customer service, and human resources. For more information, and to subscribe, visit <http://homeservicemaxmag.com>

**PODCAST: Host of Secrets of Business Mastery Podcast Show:** Mike's weekly podcast show as he explains the strategies, systems, and secrets he deployed to turned his two-man service company into a \$23 million (and growing) empire. Plus Mike interviews 'A List' guest experts on various topics like Leadership, Business Start Up, Growing Your Business, Stop Over Paying Your Taxes and much more.

## OVERVIEW

*Service business owners face numerous challenges every single day. In this report, you'll read about 4 practical strategies you can implement immediately to navigate the complexities of any challenge and eliminate that problem or challenge in your business.*

## PICTURE THIS...

You're busy reviewing the marketing material for your next big promotion. It's something that you were hoping to do earlier in the week but your schedule got away from you. Your office door is closed and you're focused. Suddenly, a knock at the door interrupts you. You answer it and it's the receptionist letting you know that one of your employees is going to be late. This is the second time this month that the employee has been late, and the fifth time in the past few months. Very frustrating! You thank the receptionist and then drop what you're doing to go deal with it – to make sure that any employee that customer was going to serve first is served by someone else. You can't help but think that you need to do something to reprimand the employee but that's something to think about later. There's a gnawing "pit" growing in your stomach because you're reminded that problems like this occur daily – sometimes hourly! – and you never get the priority work done that needs to get done. It's problems like this that are holding you back, and holding your business back; and they're so frequent that you sometimes spend all day putting out fires and dealing with a constant barrage of frustration.

## INTRODUCTION

There were probably many reasons why you decided to own a service business. Perhaps it was a family business; maybe you saw this as a long-term plan to build a big business that you could pass on to your own children; maybe you thought it would be fun or a great way to become wealthy; maybe it was the next logical step to branch out on your own after working for someone else.

There are many reasons why someone decides to own a service business, but no one chooses to do so because of the problems. In fact, if you ask service business owners whether they'd actually own a service business if they had to do it all over again, you might be surprised at the number of them who would answer "no."

It's not that they don't love the trade-line or serving customers; rather, many service business owners simply get worn out with dealing with the onslaught of daily problems.

Problems arise daily... almost hourly! Every knock in your office door and every time the phone rings, it's a potential problem. Some are big and some are small (although truth be told: after a while, even the small ones seem big). After a never-ending barrage of problems, the service business owner is often forced to ask: "what now?" when there's another knock on the door.

You may find yourself totally exhausted by the daily onslaught of challenges. You may find yourself calling in sick to your own business (even as you get frustrated by your employees who do the same!) You may be questioning whether it's worth continuing to own your service business.

If I've described any of the challenges and frustrations you feel then you'll love these powerful problem-destroying strategies, which can be implemented right away. You'll use them to eliminate problems once and for all. In fact, by the end of this report, **you may never experience another problem in your business again!**

## 4 STRATEGIES TO ELIMINATE PROBLEMS

In this section, you'll read about the 4 strategies, and you'll also get some actionable tips that you can use to implement these strategies right away.

### Change How You Define Yourself

When I started in my service business, I was an electrician. If you asked me to explain what I did, I'd tell you that I fixed people's electrical problems. Later,

when I added some employees, I became a manager, trying to manage other people.

You might define yourself in similar ways. But that's a broken way to think of yourself: Those definitions are weak and reactive. You're defining yourself based on other people and their problems!

It goes beyond how you define yourself in terms of work. It's also how you define yourself as a spouse, as a parent, as a child, as a friend, as a human being.

Was it difficult for you growing up? If you let it, that experience shapes how you define yourself today. Is your marriage or relationship with your kids strained? If you let it, your past experience shapes how you define marriage and your relationship with your kids. I could go on and on but you get the point: There are all kinds of ways we can define ourselves and we often let our past experiences (especially difficult or challenging experiences) shape how we define ourselves.

I realized I was defining myself by the negative things in my life and by the problems I faced. Everything changed the moment I stopped defining myself reactively by other people's problems and started defining myself as a **Warrior**. I went from reactive to proactive. I went from dealing with problems to leading, building, growing, and dominating.

It's time for you to shake off those old definitions about yourself that are holding you back. It's time for you to adopt a new, proactive Warrior attitude about how to live your life.

Warriors are brave, fearless action-takers who live with power and who tap into a reserve of energy that most people don't even know exists. Redefine yourself



from reactively dealing with other people's problems and from your past negative experiences... and take charge of your life.

Take action now: List all the ways you define yourself now (owner, spouse, parent, child, etc.) and then rework those into positive definitions with power.

## Change How You Define The Problem

Problems arise through the day. For many service business owners, they end up feeling bombarded by these problems, and that leads to feeling a constant sense of dread about what might happen next. They end up stressed, worried, frustrated, and even angry that there are so many issues that require their immediate attention. These problems appear even worse when customers are impacted or when income is impacted.

But what if you stopped seeing problems... *as problems*? What if you started seeing them as opportunities?



Problems are only “problems” because that’s what we label them as. We call them problems so, as a result, we end up with all the associated mental and physical symptoms that come with problems – like feelings of frustrations and stress and a growing pit gnawing in our stomachs.

But if you saw these problems differently, as opportunities to grow your business, it changes everything. By thinking of problems as opportunities, you’re simply

reframing them and telling your brain to think differently about them: they're no longer things that hold you back but they're the clearest indicator of how to grow.

When you think of problems as opportunities, you force yourself to think about the situation from a new perspective and to ask yourself "how can I learn, grow, and improve myself and my business because of this?" The solutions you generate may not necessarily be easy or pleasant in the short term but you're now thinking about how this short-term pain can turn into long-term gain.

(To find out exactly how to turn short-term pain into long-term gain, keep reading this report because that's revealed in the next two steps).

- Now, when a chronically late employee calls you and throws your entire day into disruption, that's no longer a problem... it's the clearest path to growth for your business because now you know exactly what needs to change so this doesn't happen again.
- And when a customer calls you to complain about something, that's no longer a problem... it's the clearest path to growth for your business because now you know exactly what needs to change so this doesn't happen again.

Take action now: Write down the words "problems are opportunities" at the top of your schedule every day. (Rewriting it daily helps to reinforce the truth). Then, when a problem arises, ask yourself, "what's the good in this situation?" And, "how can I turn this short-term negative situation into a long-term benefit for my business?"

## **Analyze The Situation**

So far in this report I've talked about redefining things – redefining yourself as a Warrior, and redefining problems as opportunities. Those are fundamental and need to be done first. But once you do them, this third step becomes far easier.

Now it's time to analyze the situation. Often, when a problem comes to you, you feel forced to react immediately. But an *immediate reaction* isn't always the best option. (Of course if there's a life-threatening situation then you need to react

immediately to mitigate injury, but in general an immediate reaction to most problems is not always the best option).

It helps that you are now defining the problem as an opportunity. When we face a problem, we get a pit in our stomachs and we often think we need to deal with it right away. But when we face an opportunity, we get excited about it and we often spend time thinking about how to benefit. That's the thinking you should be adopting now!

Here's how to think about the opportunity now:

Start by thinking about who is impacted. Most opportunities (formerly problems!) are primarily people-centered. That is, people are involved as the cause and/or as a result of the situation. Analyze the opportunity by listing all the people involved in the situation.

Then, think about what each person wants. Beside each name you listed, ask yourself, what is this person's ideal outcome for this situation to be concluded to their satisfaction? (Don't worry if some of those appear to be competing desires; just list them).



Next, think about the possible outcomes you've listed and figure out which outcomes or combinations of outcomes are the best for your customers and your company, and which ones are worst. As a very simple example, a chronically late employee's ideal outcome is to arrive when they want. But a customer's ideal outcome from this same situation is that they get the service they need, on time. So which one is the best for your customers and your company?

Once you have identified which outcome or outcomes are best for your company and your customers then you can take action appropriately. Your ideal outcomes



may result in more short-term pain but ultimately longer-term gain. (In the example above of a chronically late employee, the ideal outcome of the customer getting the service they need is the best win in this opportunity so you may need to go through some short-term pain of removing your employee from your company and hiring a new employee.)

It's entirely possible that the actions you take from doing this exercise may not be any different than the actions you took when you were immediately reacting to problems. However, there's a benefit to stepping back and looking at the bigger picture because sometimes you'll discover a solution that you hadn't considered before. And, sometimes you'll start to see patterns that will help you with the fourth strategy (below).

Take action now: Think of some problems you're facing and follow this exercise by listing the people involved, the ideal outcome they each desire, and which ideal outcomes are best for your company and for the customer.

## **Build A System To Keep It From Happening Again**

All too often I see service business owners dealing with the same problems over and over and over again. They face an onslaught of problems but many of those problems are the same things again and again.

You should never face a problem more than twice! As you go through the exercise of analyzing each problem, you'll start to notice patterns emerge. As I mention in my book *The Secrets Of Business Mastery*, any problem that happens more than once is an opportunity to build a system.



Systems are a sequence of steps that run automatically to keep the situation from happening or to create a better outcome when the situation happens again. (And processes are a series of systems that are strung together and often involve different people or departments, although I'll refer to everything as "systems" just to keep it simple.)

As you encounter every opportunity and analyze it, consider what needs to be done, and by whom, to ensure that the right outcomes occur.

To use the example of the late employee: If an employee is late, should someone come and find you to let you know? Depending on the size of the company, that might need to happen but it shouldn't be the first step. The first step should be to find out which customer they were supposed to serve first and then reassign another employee to take care of that customer instead. Then come alert you to the late employee (rather than making you the first point of contact so you are forced to deal with the problem yourself).

I'm using this simple example of a late employee to illustrate how a system works: Previously, your employee's lateness would result in someone talking to you first because there wasn't a system. But because you analyzed the situation and realized that the customer's ideal outcome is that they receive the service promised to them, you are prompted to build a system to deal with it. It's just a simple system: A call is received that an employee is going to be late, the person taking the call then finds out which customer was going to be served first and they have another employee reassigned to that customer, and then they come and tell you about the late employee and give you an assurance that the customer is looked after.

How different would your day be if this was the kind of thing that happened whenever there was a knock on your door? It's solved by building systems. I go into great detail about systems and how to build them in chapter 11 of my book *The Secrets Of Business Mastery*, so I'll just cover some basics here:

Whenever you have a problem that you want to build a system around, start by thinking about your ideal outcomes that you want to occur whenever the situation arises.

Then, think about how your team can achieve these ideal outcomes. Ask yourself what actions need to happen to achieve these ideal outcomes, and who needs to do these actions. Build a step-by-step system that lists actions and who is responsible for completing each action.

Next, build checklists and procedures and provide these to your employees, along with training, so they know how to handle each situation when it arises.

In the example I've been using of a late employee, if your employees call the main company number, then train the receptionist to get the details from the employee (such as when they will arrive) and to pass that info to the person in your company who is in charge of ensuring that all customers are served on time.

Note: Building a system doesn't mean that you should never hear about the situation; it just means that you aren't the one resolving each problem when it arises with a unique solution that you are reactively creating. (And once your systems have been built, check on them from time to time to make sure they're still working. Adjust when necessary.)

The purpose of building each system should be: to ensure that the best ideal outcomes for your company and your customers are achieved without constantly taking your attention and focus to fix each one individually.

You don't need to build systems ONLY when problems arise. You can build systems to proactively deal with them before they arise. In fact, as you read this report you might be thinking of a few recurring problems that could be dealt with by building systems right now.

Take action now: Think about some common problems that you've been facing lately and build a system as I've describe above. Create a system that empowers your team to take action without having to come to you to deal with it.

## **SUMMARY**

In the daily life of your service business, the unexpected will occur and challenges will arise. But these don't have to distract you and steal all of your time and

energy. You'll approach your business (and your life!) differently if you redefine yourself as a warrior, redefine problems as opportunities, pause for a moment to analyze the opportunity, and then create systems to resolve the opportunity... then you'll discover a renewed passion and excitement for tackling all the exciting opportunities that arise during each day!

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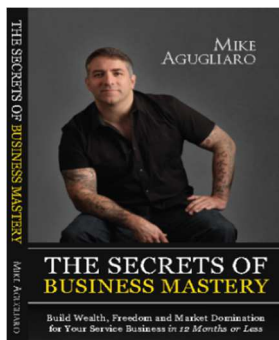
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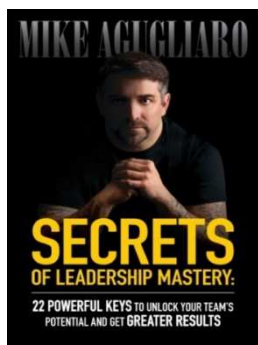
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