

## The Pillars of Business Success: the essential elements

<b>Start date</b>	21 April 2023	<b>End date</b>	23 April 2023
<b>Venue</b>	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge CB23 8AQ		
<b>Tutor</b>	Ken Dickson	<b>Course code</b>	2223NRX027
<b>Director of ISP and LL</b>	Sarah Ormrod		
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### Tutor biography

Ken Dickson BAcc (Hons), FCMA, CGMA, FRSA, the Managing Director of Axiom-e Limited, is an internationally experienced Finance Director. He believes that 'finance is fun' and, as a Tutor, reflects this in his interactive sessions with students. Through accessible talks, individual and group exercises, and examples from contemporary business as well as his own career, Ken seeks to show the practical relevance of business theories and ideas. Through this Ken equips students with skills to use in their workplaces.

Ken's teaching reflects areas of work that he has been involved with over many years.

During his early career within subsidiaries of blue-chip multinational corporations, including Unilever and Johnson Matthey, Ken's board responsibilities covered Finance, IT and Personnel. He has successfully managed 20 acquisitions, negotiated the sale of companies and implemented multi-site accounting systems.

In 2001, Ken founded Axiom-e Limited, the Cambridge-based strategic financial management consultancy, through which he advises commercial companies, charities and social enterprises who want to maximise their long-term impact.

Ken has worked in many sectors (including high-tech, manufacturing and health) where he has focused on business planning, fundraising and improving profitability. He has secured millions of pounds for clients from venture capitalists, Innovate UK, R&D tax credits and banks.

Ken has worked and taught in several countries and provides pro bono support to voluntary associations, including Zambia 2050, for whom he designed and ran the initial version of 'The Pillars of Business Success', and BE:iT, a Nigerian-based business training organisation.

When not working, Ken enjoys reading, cycling and 'bagging' Munros – not necessarily simultaneously!

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## Course programme

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### Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00 Dinner

**20:30 – 22:00 Introduction  
Overview of the Pillars of Business Success (POBS) model  
What is success?**

22:00 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30 Breakfast (for residents only)

**09:00 – 10:30 Have you got what it takes?**

10:30 Coffee

**11:00 – 12:30 Vision – building the future**

13:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:00 Free time

16:00 Tea

**16:30 – 18:00 Business Planning – the 10 Ps**

18:00 – 18:30 Free time

18:30 Dinner

**20:00 – 21:30 Strategy – helping to navigate pitfalls**

21:30 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

### Sunday

07:30 Breakfast (for residents only)

**09:00 – 10:30 Finance matters – raising, spending and managing money**

10:30 Coffee

**11:00 – 12:30 Management – people, policies and procedures  
Conclusion**

12:45 Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

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## Course syllabus

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### Aims:

The major purpose of this course is to help you think about:

- **why** you want to run a business
- **which** skills you have or need to develop
- **how** you will establish and grow your business
- **what** success looks like to you
- **who** will benefit from your work.

### Content:

Business is inherently risky and challenging. Successful organisations plan for and respond to likely and unlikely situations. Using the POBS model as a framework, this practical course considers key personal and business factors to focus on to optimise the chance of success for early-stage companies. It will introduce a number of techniques and ideas that you can implement in your own businesses. The course will refer to several areas of business, explain their relevance and show how they are inter-related, but will not cover them in any detailed way.

### Presentation of the course:

The course comprises a mixture of lectures, exercises and group discussions.

### As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

1. Clarify why they want to develop a business and what its purpose is.
2. Identify what is required to start and/or develop a business.
3. Learn a number of techniques that can be put into practice to increase business viability.
4. Understand why it is necessary to engage others with complementary skills and the importance of team-working and stakeholder involvement.
5. Appreciate the benefits of good financial management, controls and reporting.

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## Reading and resources list

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There are no pre-requisites for the course other than an interest in running a business, and a desire to learn about and discuss the benefits and challenges of doing so

Two interesting books that cover the real-life relevance of the topics covered on the course are

Braun, Adam (2014) *The Promise of a Pencil: How an Ordinary Person Can Create Extraordinary Change* (Simon & Schuster, New York)

Quinn, Mike (2021) *Failing to Win: Hard-earned lessons from a purpose-driven startup* (Mercury, South Africa)

If you have time, read one of them to get a feel for some of the challenges of running a business and what drives founders.

If you work for a company, consider what your business does, why it does what it does, and your role within the business.

Supplementary materials (articles, books and websites) will be referred to on the course.

Although the course is largely non-technical, it is recommended that students bring a calculator with them for use with some of the exercises.