



The Engine Business News

Leading Holistic Business Advisors & Specialists
Business Insights Quarter 1 - 03/25



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Business funding for business growth

Did you know your business could be eligible for co-funding to have an experienced business advisor from The Engine Limited who understands all aspects of business?

You only know what you know—and having experience is the difference between a rudderless or sinking business and one that will stand the test of new direction from strategies that actually work. The Engine Limited are leaders in the advisory space and recognised success service providers to the Regional Business Partner Network. You could be eligible for co-funding of up to \$5,000, but know that this funding pot isn't bottomless. Reach out to businessadvice@theengine.biz to find out more.

Let's look at why strategy alone won't work unless we & **you** understand your business baseline.

The importance of a strong baseline

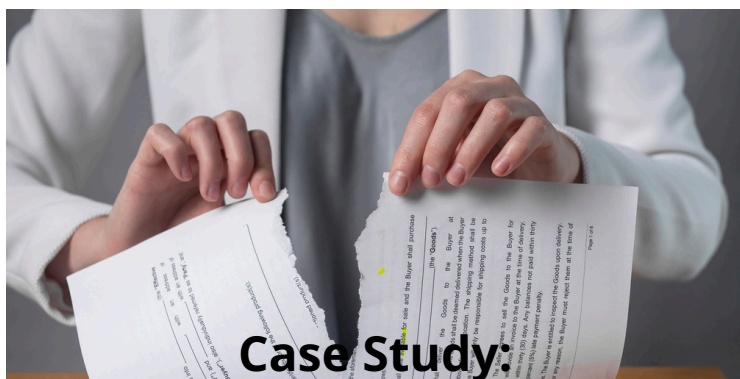
Starting a 3–5-year business strategy without first establishing a solid baseline and addressing any disconnects is like setting sail without a compass. You might have great ideas and enthusiasm, but without understanding where you currently stand, you risk drifting off course.

Establishing that baseline is about more than just numbers—it's about gaining a real understanding of your current situation, your team, your customers, and the external environment. This understanding sets the tone for all the decisions you'll make moving forward.

Why is a baseline so important?

In my experience as a business advisor for over a decade now, many businesses underestimate the importance of establishing a baseline. A baseline provides a clear snapshot of your business performance across various dimensions—financial health, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, stakeholder returns and operational efficiencies. It's your starting point and allows you to measure progress along the way.

With a well-defined baseline, you can identify what's working, what's not, and where the opportunities for growth lie. It empowers you to create an informed and robust road mapped business strategy rather than making guesses based on assumptions, outdated information or in 99.9% of cases the disconnects between owner/s and owners and their teams. Different departments might be working towards different goals, leading to confusion and inefficiencies. ***Just like you are the expert of all things in your trade, The Engine Limited have a proven track record for turning around businesses with strategy and implementation, only after the baseline has been established, cracks sealed firmly and everyone understands their roles.***



Case Study:

A business without a baseline – When directors are at odds

The Challenge: A business in turmoil

Three directors, three different visions, and no clear baseline—this was the situation facing a mid-sized professional services firm when The Engine Limited was engaged. Despite strong market demand, the business was stagnating due to internal misalignment at the board level.

Each director had a different expectation of returns:

1. Director A wanted long-term stability, reinvesting profits to scale sustainably.
2. Director B sought rapid expansion, prioritising aggressive growth strategies.
3. Director C focused on immediate personal financial gain, often drawing funds without alignment on cash flow needs.

The reality. A rudderless business, operational inefficiencies, and no unified strategy.

Mandatory intervention

Recognising the severity of the situation, The Engine Limited's Advisor took a firm approach. Rather than getting caught in the directors' power struggles, they highlighted the key Issues:-

- No baseline or agreed business strategy – each director's different vision meant no clear financial, operational, or strategic direction.
- Failure to meet governance standards – lack of education on governance, no structured reporting, unchecked financial decisions, and absence of director accountability.
- Personal liability risks – The actions of one director could lead to potential litigation from creditors, investors, and even the other directors.
- Business viability at stake – Without clear alignment, the company risked insolvency, regulatory scrutiny, and reputational damage.

Commit or face the consequences

The Engine Limited's Business Advisor laid out the reality for the directors—either they aligned on a baseline or risked total business failure and potential personal litigation. The key points were:

- Agree on Financial Baseline – Define expected business returns, reinvestment strategies, and director remuneration.
- Governance Education & Reform – all 3 were not clear on their governance duties. Education & proper governance structures needed to be implemented, including financial reporting, decision-making protocols, and director responsibilities.
- Accountability for Director C – A decision had to be made: Could Director C remain, or was their mismanagement a liability? If not addressed, the other directors had grounds for legal action for losses incurred

The Outcome:

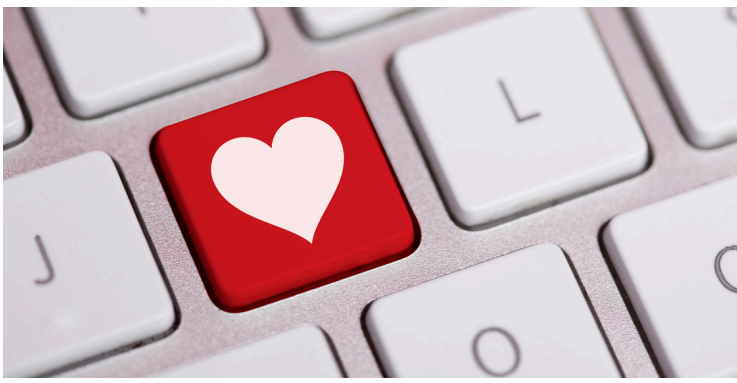
A critical turning point

Faced with the reality of their situation, the directors had two choices—align and commit to a unified strategy, or allow legal proceedings to determine the company's fate.

Under the advisor's guidance, the business took the following steps:

- ✓ Formalised a business baseline – A financial model was developed, ensuring all directors understood and committed to expected returns and reinvestment strategies.
- ✓ Strengthened governance – New policies were implemented, including monthly financial reporting and director accountability measures.
- ✓ Director C's position reviewed – Faced with potential litigation for breach of duty, Director C either had to step down or demonstrate a willingness to align. In this case, they chose to exit, allowing the business to move forward without obstruction.
- ✓ Risk mitigation strategy developed – The business put in place a clear succession and compliance plan to prevent similar issues in the future.

If you have misalignment at ownership level, **let's have a conversation.** It's time to take ownership of your business—and your return. © The Engine Limited



Marketing is like dating

branding is the reason customers say yes

Imagine going on a date where the other person never talks about themselves, doesn't show up online, and has no social presence. You'd probably wonder if they even exist! The same applies to business. Marketing is like dating—you put yourself out there, engage, and attract interest. But branding? That's what makes people commit.

And yet, so many businesses are invisible.

- ◆ No LinkedIn presence—no directors, no employees, no business updates.
- ◆ A flash website—stunning but hidden from search engines.
- ◆ No digital footprint—making it impossible for customers to connect.



In today's competitive market, being seen is everything. If customers can't find you, they can't buy from you.

Visibility & Data = The Power Duo

Your brand needs to be more than just a logo or a website. It needs to be a living, breathing presence across multiple platforms. Customers trust businesses they can research, follow, and engage with. And data? It tells you what's working and what's not. **This is why at The Engine Limited, we take a 360-degree approach to your business.** We identify:

- ✓ Where you're missing opportunities for visibility
- ✓ How to improve your brand's presence
- ✓ The data you need to make smarter marketing decisions

Case Study: Transforming an invisible business into a recognised brand

The Challenge: A business hiding in plain sight

A professional services firm approached The Engine Limited with a major problem—they had invested heavily in a sleek website and offered top-tier services, yet no one knew they existed. Their LinkedIn had no listed employees, no updates, and no thought leadership. Their website wasn't optimised for search, and their branding lacked a strong, recognisable presence.

They weren't just losing potential customers; they were invisible to clients, investors, partners, and talent.

The Solution: A 360° tailored brand & business strategy

At The Engine Limited, we don't just offer marketing advice—we link branding to the business and fiscal strategy for real impact.

Our process included:

- ✓ Brand Audit & Positioning: We assessed how they were perceived in the market and refined their messaging to align with their core business goals.
- ✓ LinkedIn & Digital Presence: We optimised their LinkedIn with clear leadership profiles, engaging content, and strategic networking to position them as industry authorities.
- ✓ SEO & Visibility Strategy: Their website was restructured with SEO-driven content, ensuring they ranked for the right search terms and attracted high-value leads.
- ✓ Fiscal Alignment: By integrating their brand strategy with financial goals, we helped them prioritise the right marketing investments—ones that delivered measurable ROI.

The Result: from obscurity to market leader

- 🚀 30% increase in inbound leads within six months
- 🚀 LinkedIn engagement grew by 200%, driving direct B2B opportunities
- 🚀 Ranked on page 1 of Google for key industry terms
- 🚀 Gained investor interest, leading to strategic partnerships

By ensuring their brand strategy worked hand-in-hand with their business and fiscal strategy, we turned an invisible business into a recognised leader in their industry. 💡 Are you being seen? Let's make sure your business isn't the best-kept secret. **Contact The Engine Limited today.**

Case Study: The Cost of Ignoring Trading Terms



Background: A mid-sized trade business in trouble

A mid-sized trade business approached The Engine Limited when it was on the verge of collapse, struggling with hundreds of thousands in unpaid invoices. Despite a strong client base and high demand for its services, cash flow issues were strangling the company's ability to operate.

A deeper analysis uncovered a critical issue: the director had invested \$7,000 in professionally drafted terms of trade templates but never implemented them. The result? No enforceable agreements, no payment security, and clients who simply refused to pay.

The Root of the Problem: The director's failure stemmed from two key mistakes:

1 **Buying something he didn't understand**

- The director purchased the terms of trade but found them too complex and time-consuming to implement.
- Instead of seeking clarification on what he was buying, he set them aside, believing his business could function without formal contracts.
- He lacked the confidence to explain them to his team, meaning no one enforced the terms—or even mentioned them to clients.

2 **No trading baseline agreement**

- Without clear terms of engagement, contracts, or trading agreements, there was no structured way to secure payments.
- Clients took advantage of this lack of clarity—delayed payments, disputes, and outright refusals to pay became the norm.
- The company had no legal recourse because there was no signed agreement outlining payment terms, penalties, or obligations.

The Engine Limited's engagement resulted in this business being saved from collapse & loss of reputation. Our key success involved:-

- ✓ Secureing over \$120,000 in overdue payments – Through structured debt recovery and improved invoicing.
- ✓ Rebuilding cash flow stability – Implemented clear client payment expectations and processes.
- ✓ Empowering the director & staff through capability training & education – The team was trained on how to explain and enforce the terms confidently.
- ✓ Ensuring the business avoided Insolvency – A clear payment framework prevented further financial deterioration.

Key lessons: The true cost of ignoring business foundations

💡 **Don't buy what you don't understand –**

Professionals providing business solutions must ensure their clients understand what they're purchasing. Simply providing templates without education is a missed opportunity.

💡 **Trading terms are non-negotiable and necessary –**

A business without clear contracts will always be at risk. Clients must know expectations, payment terms, and consequences before engaging services.

💡 **A Business without a baseline is a business without a future –**

Without structured trading agreements, cash flow collapses, legal protection is weak, and financial survival is uncertain.

This case study highlights how ignoring fundamental business processes and a lack of experience can push a company to the brink of failure. If you're in business and haven't reviewed your trading terms—or worse, don't have them—The Engine Limited can help.

Why a Business WOF Audit is Essential

Don't let your business become another cautionary tale. Take control of your debtor management & cashflow today. Much like a vehicle needs a regular Warrant of Fitness to ensure it's roadworthy, businesses require ongoing audits to stay on track and function efficiently. The Engine's Business WOF Audit will give you a clear, honest picture of where you stand and provide actionable steps to realign your team, boost efficiency, and increase the value of your business. Book your Business Warrant of Fitness Audit today and get back in the driver's seat. Learn more about our Business WOF Audit [here](#).

"Forced to rehire an employee fired"



Firefighter wins appeal, must learn sexual harassment policy after misconduct



By Al Williams

Open Justice reporter - NZ Herald - 16 Mar, 2025 01:00 PM ⌚ 5 mins to read

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As reported in the NZ Herald on 16/03/25 a long-serving firefighter has been told to familiarise himself with sexual harassment policy after a protracted employment investigation in which he was fired then reinstated.

However, his bosses are considering appealing the recently released Employment Relations Authority ruling, saying there is no room in their organisation for serious misconduct.

Auckland firefighter Russell Kinzett was fired in May after a series of complaints of sexual harassment and bullying involving two other Fire and Emergency New Zealand staff which stretched back to 2021.

. Full article is [here](#).

The Engine Limited's response:-

The Engine Limited's Response to the Employment Relations Authority Ruling:-

At The Engine Limited, we believe that harassment—sexual or otherwise—has no place in life or the workforce. Every

business or organisation has a duty to provide a safe, respectful, and professional environment for all employees, free from bullying, intimidation, or inappropriate behaviour.

The case of Auckland firefighter Russell Kinzett highlights serious concerns, both in terms of workplace conduct and the processes followed in handling the matter. While due process is critical in employment investigations, the prolonged timeline and the decision to allow the employee to continue working for 15 weeks following the report raises significant procedural concerns.

From an HR and governance perspective, the case has merit for appeal, however further time, cost and reputation needs to be considered as well as potential for appeal to be unsuccessful. **This will be an interesting case to follow should it go to appeal.**

Serious misconduct, especially involving allegations of sexual harassment and bullying, should warrant swift and decisive action—including immediate suspension pending investigation—to protect all parties involved. The delay in action may have weakened the legal grounds for termination, despite the validity of the complaints. Employers must ensure that their policies and processes align with best practice, ensuring that:

- ✓ Clear policies on misconduct, harassment, and bullying are in place and regularly reinforced.
- ✓ Prompt and decisive action is taken when allegations arise, including early intervention and, where necessary, suspension.
- ✓ Employment investigations are conducted efficiently, balancing procedural fairness with the need to uphold a safe and respectful workplace.

This case serves as a reminder to all businesses that workplace culture and HR policies must not only exist but be actively enforced to prevent prolonged investigations, workplace harm, and potential legal challenges. **The Engine Limited** has navigated many HR issues and we ensure we mitigate the risk of the business, with a focus on avoiding conflict, and ideally an outcome that allows parties to move on with their lives. **Reach out to The Engine Limited for a**

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& governance for growth-focused business owners***

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