

The Engine Business News

Leading Holistic Business Advisors & Specialists
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Change starts with YOU:

Why business owners must commit to *True Transformation*

Every business owner we meet has, at some point, said the words “I want things to change.” Maybe it’s about growing sales, building a stronger team, creating more balance, or adapting to shifting markets. **But here’s the hard truth: wanting change and committing to change are two very different things.** Too often, business owners hope for a different result while continuing to operate in the same way. They want their staff to step up, their market to improve, or their processes to magically become efficient—without recognising that the shift has to begin with them.

The Ownership of Change

As a business owner, you are the cultural driver, the pace-setter, and the decision-maker. If you aren’t prepared to step into the discomfort of change, neither will your team. Your staff won’t suddenly innovate if you resist new ideas. Your clients won’t see growth in value if you refuse to refine your approach. Change requires more than words—it demands action, consistency, and the willingness to let go of old habits that no longer serve your vision.

Saying vs. Doing

- Saying “I want to delegate more” is easy. Actually trusting your team with responsibility, resisting the urge to micromanage, and supporting them when mistakes happen—that’s commitment.
- Saying “I want better results” is easy. Implementing new strategies, tracking performance, and holding yourself accountable when things slip—that’s commitment.
- Saying “I want work-life balance” is easy. Setting boundaries, learning to say no, and restructuring your time—that’s commitment.

Change is not a passive wish list. It’s an active process.

Change Starts With You

When you, as the business owner, lead by example, everything else follows. If you embrace change with openness and consistency, your people and processes will align. If you resist, your business stalls.

The question is not: “Do you want change?”

The real question is: “Are you willing to change?”

Because transformation doesn’t start with the market, your staff, or external circumstances. It starts with you.

Did you know you could be eligible as a business owner for funding up to \$5000 for our business coaching services? Email:- businessadvice@theengine.biz to find out more.

👉 **Start here** and let’s make these critical months count —together.

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Above story written by Sharon Stephenson for

Womans Day - read [here](#)

Advocacy

Advocacy in Action:
Beyond a One-Time Gesture

Let's continue from last month's article on Advocacy in Action: Why Trusted Advisors Navigate the Field of Needles - Part II

Advocacy is not a one-off event. It is not a moment to stand up, speak out, and then retreat back into silence. True advocacy requires commitment, consistency, and credibility. It is an ongoing responsibility to remain present, to keep showing up even when the attention fades, and to demonstrate through action that your voice, and the voices you represent, carry weight and meaning.

The recent Woman's Day article on Catherine Cooke, published and distributed the week of 15 September 2025, is a perfect reminder of this. The feature was not about chasing notoriety or seeking publicity. Instead, it was about sharing Catherine's story of personal and business adversity, one that reflects the resilience, strength, and determination that many leaders quietly embody but rarely talk about. It captured the essence of what it means to advocate not only for yourself, but also for the wider communities and businesses you serve.

Advocacy in business is much the same. It is not about speaking up once when a policy, regulation, or competitor issue arises. It is about standing the test of time. It requires maintaining the strength and discipline to ensure your business, and the people within it—are protected and supported over the long term. This means being proactive, not reactive. It means anticipating challenges before they become crises, and positioning yourself to respond with clarity and confidence when the unexpected does arise.

Too often, business owners treat advocacy as a "oncer." They rally in a moment of difficulty but fail to sustain the momentum when the immediate pressure eases. Yet consistency is what builds trust. And trust, built over time, is what strengthens reputations, retains employees, and secures relationships with clients and stakeholders. Without that ongoing commitment, businesses risk being seen as transactional, only stepping up when they have something to gain, rather than being recognised as credible and values-driven.

This is where the role of an experienced business advisor becomes invaluable. Doing business alone can feel overwhelming, particularly when faced with complex matters that require not just action, but strategy, foresight, and resilience. Having someone beside you who has the strength and experience to navigate adversity makes all the difference. An advisor with lived experience, proven outcomes, and a strong advocacy track record brings credibility, clarity, and courage at times when it matters most.

Catherine's journey is a reminder that advocacy is as much about persistence as it is about presence. In business, just as in personal life, consistency builds trust, and trust builds influence. And influence, when used wisely, creates lasting change. Whether you are protecting your employees, negotiating with stakeholders, or standing firm on what is right for your business, the strength of advocacy lies not in the one-off fight, but in the ongoing commitment to stand for what matters.

And sometimes, the most important lesson is recognising when a relationship is transactional rather than mutual, and having the courage to step back while protecting your wellbeing, your trust, and your integrity. For those who revert to bad behaviour—whether through exploitation, manipulation, or breaking agreements, the reminder is clear: short-term tactics might win moments, but long-term reputations are built only by those who act with credibility and consistency.

This is why the right advisor is not just someone who gives you answers, they stand with you, advocate for you, and ensure that your business has the resilience to thrive even when the odds seem stacked against you.

Doing business alone may sometimes feel like the simplest path, but it is rarely the most sustainable. With the right guidance, you gain more than just perspective. You gain an advocate who will stand beside you long after the headlines fade, ensuring that your business, your people, and your values continue to move forward.

Let's have a conversation that counts. 📞 Start here

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Leadership Bullying: The hidden cost of silence

At The Engine, we continue to see cases of leadership bullying across workplaces and communities. Bullying is not always loud or obvious. It can manifest subtly through exclusion, passive-aggressive remarks, undermining, or misuse of authority. Yet the impact is far-reaching, damaging individuals, teams, organisations, and even entire communities.

Unfortunately, we're also witnessing this behaviour far too often in politics. From local body elections through to national debates, leadership bullying has been normalised in the public arena. This playground-style behaviour erodes trust, undermines credibility, and leaves a digital footprint that becomes a permanent reflection of character. Leaders sometimes forget: once online, words and actions live forever.

Why leadership bullying is so damaging

The consequences of leadership bullying ripple out in multiple ways:

Cultural decay – It creates a climate of fear where innovation and collaboration are stifled.

Reputational Damage – For both individuals and organisations, credibility is eroded quickly in the digital age.

Talent drain – Good people leave toxic environments, costing businesses and communities dearly.

Mental Health Impact – Anxiety, burnout, and disengagement become the norm for those subjected to abusive leadership.

Our observations at The Engine

From our work with businesses and leaders, we see recurring patterns:

Fear-Driven decision making teams are less likely to speak up or challenge poor decisions, leading to stagnation.

High Staff turnover – Businesses lose valuable employees who refuse to stay in toxic environments.

Community spillover – Leadership bullying in politics filters down, normalising aggressive or dismissive behaviour across society.

Reputational ruin – Leaders forget that once their words or actions are public, they cannot be undone. This is particularly dangerous in political life, where online statements often outlast terms in office.

The Reality in Politics

We only have to look at local body politics right now to see how playground bullying plays out on public platforms. Heated exchanges, personal attacks, and unchecked commentary may feel like quick wins in the moment, but they have lasting consequences. The public sees the behaviour for what it is: a reflection of poor leadership. Over time, reputational status diminishes, and trust is lost.

How we create change at The Engine

At The Engine, we specialise in helping leaders and teams confront these behaviours directly. Through our Culture & Emotional Wellness Training, conversations become real—without fear of retribution. We guide leaders in:

- Recognising destructive patterns in themselves and others
- Building emotional intelligence and resilience
- Creating environments where people feel safe, valued, and heard
- Repairing trust and accountability at every level

The call to Leaders

The truth is simple: bullying leadership is unsustainable. It damages not just individuals but the legacy of those who engage in it. Whether in business or politics, leaders must realise their words and actions are permanent markers of character. If you are a leader, or aspire to be one, ask yourself: Do my actions today strengthen my credibility, or diminish it? At The Engine, we believe leadership should elevate, not diminish. And when leaders embrace accountability and empathy, the results are transformational—for people, businesses, and communities alike.

As expert leaders check out feedback on us from other business owners [here](#).

👉 Book your [discovery call](#) and let's get started.

Case Study: When legacy brands face reality



Heinz Wattie's New Zealand hasn't made a profit since 2021, financial records have revealed. Photo / File

Premium Home / Business / Companies / Agribusiness

Wattie's financial filings reveal three years of losses and a \$210m writedown



Tom Rayne

Multimedia Business Reporter • NZ Herald • 21 Sep, 2025 08:00 AM • 4 mins to read

Lessons from Wattie's Losses: What Business Owners Must Read Between the Lines

The NZ Herald report of 20 September 2025 revealed that Wattie's (Heinz Wattie's NZ) has been recording losses for three consecutive years, culminating in a huge \$210 million writedown in 2024. The losses are spread across impaired goodwill, brands, trademarks, customer lists, as well as property, plant & equipment.

As business advisors, stories like this are both cautionary and instructive. For many businesses, especially those that have been around for decades or have strong legacy brands, this kind of downturn can feel distant — until it becomes real. The Wattie's case shows several critical areas where owners should be paying attention, drawing lessons, and making strategic decisions now.

What Wattie's tells us: Key Signals

- *Goodwill isn't guaranteed value*
- *Operational Costs & Margins Under Pressure*
- *Sensitivity to Assumptions Matters*
- *Relevance & Product Demand Shift*

What businesses should do differently: From The Engine's perspective

Drawing from our experience advising businesses, here are steps to consider — not as theory, but as actions you can take now to avert or mitigate a "Wattie's-like" situation:

Regular Financial Health Check-Ups

- Don't wait for annual reports. Quarterly reviews of revenue streams, cost lines, margins, and comparison to forecasts help catch drift early.

Challenge Assumptions & Stress Test Plans

- When you build a business plan or forecast, include "what if" scenarios: what if input costs rise 10-20%, or consumer demand shifts, or a competitor undercuts prices, or regulatory changes. How resilient is your business then?

Invest in Brand Relevance & Customer Perception

- Just having a strong legacy brand is not enough. Are you staying relevant? Does your product meet what people want now (not what they wanted 10 years ago)? Are you communicating value not just based on price, but based on features, quality, localness, sustainability, etc.?

Cost Discipline Without Compromise

- Revise supplier contracts, review overheads, optimise operations. But also protect what makes your business unique (product quality, customer service) — cutting too deep in differentiators erodes brand value.

Governance, Transparency & Asset Valuation

- Treat your intangible assets (brand, goodwill, IP) and physical assets (machinery, property) honestly on your books. Conduct regular valuations. Be willing to write down or reallocate if market evidence is showing those assets are overvalued.

The Role of a Strong Business Advisor

An advisor from The Engine who brings experience, insight, and credibility becomes invaluable, offering:

- **Objective analysis:** It is hard to see blind spots in your own operations. An external, experienced advisor can read financial statements, market trends, and consumer data and point out where optimism may be masking risk.
- **Early warning & strategy adjustment:** Advisors help you sense when something is shifting (cost pressures, margins, consumer behaviour) before those shifts manifest as losses or impairment.
- **Credibility with stakeholders:** Whether it's lenders, suppliers, investors, or community, having professional, data-backed planning and advice helps maintain trust when tough decisions are needed.
- **Execution focus:** It's one thing to see risks; it's another to act. Good advisors don't just assess — they help you build and follow through with plans (restructuring, cost control, product repositioning, market diversification, etc.).

Final Reflections

The Wattie's case is a wake-up call. Long-standing businesses with well-known brand names are not immune.

At The Engine, we work not only to help clients avoid such heavy writedowns and losses, but also to build systems of resilience: planning, regular review, clear decision-making, and alignment with market reality. Doing business alone is a risk. Doing business with rigorous oversight, credibility, and strategic support is how you protect your business, your people, and your future.

Our Message to Business Owners

👉 Book a discovery call, mitigate risk & preserve your business viability & reputation.

Case Study: When HR conversations escalate



'I am going to burn the place down': Warren and Mahoney employee's threats started after meeting with HR over her attendance



Shayne Currie

NZME Editor-at-Large · NZ Herald · 15 Feb, 2025 06:52 AM · 4 mins to read

This story is confronting. According to reporting, threats were made after a meeting with HR about attendance — a meeting that should have been part of a caring, documented process but instead sparked serious risk. When conversations about performance or attendance trigger threats, all organisations must recognise that they are no longer dealing with a single HR issue but with safety, wellbeing and legal risk. [NZ Herald](#)

Here are the thoughts on the above NZ Herald piece, link [here](#), offered from the perspective of Catherine Cooke and The Engine Limited. These reflections are intended to help leaders and boards understand the risks, responsibilities and practical responses when workplace situations escalate. NZ Herald

First, a clear distinction: raising attendance or performance concerns is a legitimate part of managing a business. How those conversations are run matters enormously. They must be respectful, private, clearly documented, and accompanied by offers of support (for example, health, wellbeing or flexible options) where appropriate. If a meeting is experienced as accusatory or shaming, it can provoke defensive, and sometimes dangerous, reactions. That's why we always coach leaders to prepare, to listen, and to offer practical pathways rather than simply issuing ultimatums.

Second, duty of care comes first. When a threat is made — verbal or written, employers must act immediately to protect people. This is practical, not performative: assess risk, secure the workplace, provide support to affected staff, and if necessary involve the relevant authorities. Delay or minimisation can compound harm, damage trust, and expose the organisation to serious legal and reputational consequences.

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Third, communication and documentation are your best allies. Keep precise records of meetings, the support offered, the employee's responses, and any subsequent incidents. If managers are fearful of an adverse reaction, they should ensure HR or a neutral third party is present, and follow an agreed script that focuses on facts and support. This protects both the individual and the organisation and provides the necessary evidence trail should the matter escalate.

Fourth, the situation highlights the importance of wellbeing and early intervention. Attendance issues are often symptoms of deeper problems — mental health challenges, family stress, or other pressures. Investing in genuine wellbeing programmes, clear referral pathways, and training managers to recognise signs of distress will often prevent matters from reaching crisis point. We advise embedding regular check-ins, confidential support options, and a culture where asking for help is normalised.

Fifth, leadership must be visible and accountable. How leaders respond when a colleague threatens harm says everything about the culture they are building. Leaders who respond with decisive care — protecting people, being transparent with affected teams (within privacy constraints), and taking responsibility for how conversations are held — build trust. Leaders who downplay risk or prioritise reputation over safety erode that trust and put everyone at risk.

Sixth, reputational consequences are real and lasting. Incidents spilled into public view quickly. In today's environment, once an event is in the public domain it shapes how customers, partners and prospective staff see you. Swift, proportionate action that prioritises safety and communicates values clearly will mitigate reputational damage far better than silence or defensiveness.

Finally, this is a reminder that policies alone are not enough. Policy must be backed by practice, training and courage. We regularly work with boards, executive teams and HR to test processes, run scenario planning, and build the muscle memory organisations need to respond well. That includes rehearsing de-escalation, risk assessment, media response and post-incident care.

👉 If your business is unsure how to prepare, respond or recover when a workplace situation escalates, seek The Engine's advice early. Reach out here 09 869 3990 or email businessadvice@theengine.biz with subject line HR support needed.



Let's revisit When It's Time to Walk Away: Disengaging from Unhealthy Relationships

Reflections from Catherine Cooke & Christine Rankin earlier this year

Catherine Cooke and Christine Rankin on their podcast ***Unbreakable Spirit*** explored a topic that resonates with all of us: knowing when to walk away from unhealthy relationships. Looking back on that conversation, it's clear how deeply personal yet universally relevant this message is for both life and business.

Recognising toxic dynamics

Catherine and Christine opened the discussion by highlighting how certain relationships, whether personal or professional can leave us drained, uneasy, or constantly second-guessing ourselves.

The first step in reclaiming your energy is awareness: recognising patterns of manipulation, negativity, or disregard. Identifying these dynamics allows you to make conscious choices rather than reacting out of habit or obligation.

The Power of Boundaries

Christine spoke powerfully about boundaries.

Protecting your emotional and mental well-being isn't about shutting others out—it's about making space for growth, joy, and clarity. Limiting time spent with negative influences, or in some cases, stepping away entirely, can be challenging but transformative. Boundaries give you permission to prioritise your health, values, and aspirations.

Surround yourself with uplifting connections

Catherine emphasised the importance of positive relationships. Mentors, friends, or communities that encourage, challenge, and inspire you are crucial to personal and professional resilience. When toxic connections are replaced with supportive ones, your energy and focus are freed to pursue meaningful goals. For business owners, leaders, or anyone navigating complex environments, the right network becomes a source of strength and clarity.

Self-Care and letting go of guilt

A recurring theme in the conversation was self-care. Christine reminded listeners that choosing well-being over toxicity is not selfish—it is necessary. Practising mindfulness, focusing on what brings joy, and letting go of guilt are essential steps in maintaining emotional resilience. Walking away from negativity isn't a loss; it's an act of courage and self-preservation.

Bringing it into business

At The Engine, we see the same principles play out in professional settings. Leaders who fail to recognise toxic dynamics—be it in teams, partnerships, or client relationships—risk burnout, poor decision-making, and diminished organisational culture. Knowing when to step back, set boundaries, or seek support isn't just a personal skill; it's a critical business strategy.

Reflecting on this episode reminds us that disengaging from what doesn't serve you creates space for growth, opportunity, and stronger, more meaningful connections. Whether in life or business, surrounding yourself with the right people, practising self-care, and having the courage to walk away when needed are fundamental to long-term success and well-being.

Re-watch the PODCAST [here](#). We are here to help.

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& governance for growth-focused business owners***

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