



**THE
ENGINE™**
POWERING BUSINESS RESULTS

**Inquire re co-funded
business support for your
business with our building
management capability &
coaching programmes.**

RE-BOOT

NOW



**Why Outside Influence Changes Everything
The Engine Business Coaching
(click picture above to watch the video)**



Can you afford to lose what you have built?

When your business starts slipping — it's already further gone than you think

Why firefighting is costing you more than you can see.

Right now across New Zealand, we are seeing a very real shift in the business landscape.

It is not always loud.

It does not always show up immediately in the numbers.

But it is there.

Owners are working harder than ever.

Teams are stretched. Margins are tightening.

And what used to feel **"under control"** is starting to feel... harder.

When you are deep in the trenches, managing day-to-day operations, responding to staff, dealing with suppliers, chasing sales, and navigating cashflow, something subtle happens.

You stop seeing the full picture.

And when that happens, issues don't stabilise.

They compound.

Hard check: don't ignore this

Be honest:

- What are you avoiding right now?
- Where are you losing money that you haven't properly investigated?
- Who in your business are you trusting without oversight?
- What would break if you stepped away for 30 days?
- How long have you known something isn't right — and done nothing?
- Are you leading... or just reacting?

If this made you uncomfortable, that's the point.

Most businesses don't fail overnight.

They drift. They ignore. They delay.

The Engine Business News

Leading Holistic Business Advisors & Specialists
Business Insights Quarter 1 - 03/26



What we are seeing across businesses right now

In the past quarter alone, we have worked with business owners experiencing:

- Employee theft or financial irregularities that went undetected for months;
- Declining productivity with no clear accountability framework;
- Sales pipelines slowing, with no structured recovery strategy;
- Burnout at owner and leadership level impacting decision quality;
- Cashflow pressure being managed week-to-week with no forward planning;
- Over-reliance on one or two key clients;
- No succession depth or contingency plan if something shifts;
- Governance existing in name, but not in behaviour.

Individually, each of these looks manageable. Collectively, they create instability. And the risk is not just financial.

It is operational. It is cultural. It is reputational.

The cost of not stepping back

We often hear: **"We'll deal with that next quarter."**

"It's not that bad yet." "We just need a bit more time."

But what we consistently see is this:

By the time something is obvious, it has already been developing for months, sometimes years.

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The cost of inaction shows up as:

Eroded margins | Increased stress | Poorer decisions
Weakened team performance | Theft | Reduced business value | Dissatisfied customers and in some cases, significant financial loss.

Take action before something forces you to

If you want to understand the true position of your business - not just what it feels like day-to-day — The Engine's Business Warrant of Fitness is the place to start.

Learn more [here](#).

Businesses may also be eligible for co-funded advisory support of up to \$5,000.

At The Engine, we don't deal in assumptions.

We deal in clarity, structure, and execution.

Because when your business starts slipping, the time to act is not later. It is now.



Managing external pressures

We have been here before. And we will be here again. Rising fuel costs, tightening margins, pressure on households, reduced discretionary spend. These are not new cycles in business. But each time they return, they test businesses in the same way. Not on how hard owners work. But on how well they respond.

Right now across New Zealand, fuel is again becoming a meaningful pressure point. For some industries it is direct. For others it is flowing through freight, suppliers and customer behaviour. ***And as always, the response is immediate.***

What we are seeing

Business owners are already adjusting. More work from home to reduce travel. Fewer client in person visits. Consolidated routes and scheduling. Holding pricing where the market feels tight. Absorbing cost increases where they cannot be passed on.

These are practical responses. But they are often reactive. And reactive decisions without structure create unintended consequences.

What this tells us

Fuel is not just a cost issue. It is a behaviour shift. When travel reduces, other things move with it.

- Sales pipelines can slow. Client relationships can weaken.
- Accountability can drop in remote teams.
- Productivity can become inconsistent.
- Culture can fragment.
- The risk is not the fuel cost itself.
- The risk is allowing cost pressure to quietly erode performance.

Where businesses drift

We are seeing a pattern. Cost decisions made without revenue modelling. Work from home introduced without accountability frameworks. Sales activity reduced without replacement strategy. Margin pressure tolerated for now. No clear plan for ongoing cost movement. These are not poor decisions. They are incomplete decisions.

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And incomplete decisions lead to drift.

Case reflection

We worked with a field based service business that reduced travel to manage fuel costs. Within a short period, client visits dropped, sales slowed and team output became inconsistent. Revenue softened.



The intention was cost control. The outcome was reduced performance. We reset structure. Defined where in person mattered. Introduced sales activity targets. Implemented accountability reporting. Reviewed pricing. Modelled cost versus revenue impact.

Within three months, sales activity stabilised, accountability improved and margin pressure was better managed.

The difference was not the market. It was the response. what to do now

External pressure will continue. What matters is how you respond.

Understand your numbers properly. Model the impact across margin, pricing and delivery. Protect revenue before cutting cost. Reducing sales activity is often more expensive than fuel. Structure remote work. Output and accountability must be clear. Review pricing with confidence where required. Maintain presence where it matters commercially. Avoid delay. Pressure compounds when left unmanaged.

Where The Engine fits

We have been here before.

The businesses that come through stronger are the ones that step back early and introduce structure into their decision making.

Through The Engine's ***Business Warrant of Fitness***, we assess cost exposure, revenue resilience, operational efficiency and leadership capability under pressure. It gives you clarity on what is actually happening in your business, not just what it feels like day to day. Because when you are deep in the trenches, perspective is the first thing you lose.

Final thought

This is not about fuel. It is about discipline.

External pressure will always exist. The question is whether your business reacts to it or leads through it. take action. If rising costs are starting to influence how your business operates, take a structured view now.

Reach out to us here. Because we have been here before. And the businesses that succeed are the ones that choose structure over reaction.



Every business owner needs a GPS - Part 1

Clarity, accountability and the discipline to follow through. This is not a typical leadership conversation that includes strategy decks, growth targets or performance metrics.

For us at The Engine the heart of the conversation is about something far more fundamental.

- **Knowing who you are.**
- **Knowing what you stand for.**
- **And knowing how you show up.**

In business, we don't talk about this enough.
the missing piece in most businesses

Many business owners are not short of ideas.

- **They are not short of ambition.**
- **They are not short of capability.**

What they are often missing is their own GPS.

Not a business plan.

- Not a budget.
- Not a list of goals.

A clear internal reference point.

Where am I actually going?

Why does it matter?

How will I make decisions when things get hard?

What will I hold myself accountable to?

Without that, even the most capable business owner drifts.

What happens without a GPS

We see this consistently across businesses.

Owners are busy. They are committed. They are working hard. But underneath that:

- **Decisions are reactive rather than deliberate**
- **Priorities shift depending on pressure**
- **Accountability becomes inconsistent**
- **Energy is spread across too many directions**
- **Progress feels harder than it should**

There is movement.

But not always direction.

And over time, that creates frustration.

Not because the business is failing.

But because it is not becoming what the owner intended.

Clarity changes everything

When a business owner has clarity, real clarity, not surface level, everything shifts.

Decision making becomes faster.

Boundaries become clearer.

Priorities stop competing.

Energy is directed, not diluted.

You stop looking outward for answers.

You start backing yourself.

But clarity on its own is not enough.

clarity without accountability still leads to drift

This is where most business owners fall down.

They have moments of clarity.

They attend a workshop.

They reset their thinking.

They commit to change.

And then the business pulls them back in.

Emails. Staff. Clients. Cashflow. Problems.

Without structure, clarity fades.

Without accountability, intention turns into delay.

And the cycle repeats.

This is where structure matters

At The Engine, we see this every day.

The difference between businesses that move forward and those that stay stuck is not intelligence.

It is structure.



Don't leave money on the table

Click the picture above to watch

Every business owner needs a GPS - Part 2

Through our 1 to 1 coaching and Think Tank group coaching, we create:

- Clear articulation of direction and priorities
- Defined commercial and personal milestones
- Regular, disciplined accountability sessions
- Space to step out of the day to day and think properly
- Challenge where needed and support where required

You are no longer operating in isolation.
You are no longer relying on motivation.
You are working within a framework that requires progress.

Why accountability works

Accountability changes behaviour.

When you know you will be asked:

What did you commit to?

- What have you actually done?
- What has moved forward?
- What has not?

You operate differently.

You make decisions earlier.

- You follow through more consistently.
- You stop avoiding what matters.

And that is where real progress happens.

Our training programmes are also approved within the Regional Business Partner framework, meaning eligible businesses may access co funded support.

Case reflection

We worked with a business owner who described themselves as "busy but stuck."

They had strong revenue, a capable team, and plenty of ideas. But no clear structure around execution.

Within the first phase of working together:

- We defined their personal and business GPS
- Clarified what mattered and what did not
- Introduced structured accountability sessions
- Set measurable, time-bound actions

Within a short period:

- Decision making improved
- Team alignment strengthened
- Key issues were addressed instead of delayed
- The owner felt back in control

Their words were simple.

"I'm not searching anymore. I know where I'm going."

Why this matters now

In the current environment, with pressure on costs, performance and people, clarity is not a luxury.

It is essential.

Because when external pressure increases, internal direction matters more.

If you do not have a clear GPS, the business will pull you in multiple directions.

If you do not have accountability, the important work will always be pushed out.

Why The Engine

At The Engine, we don't just talk about clarity.

- We build it.
- We structure it.
- We hold it to account.

This is why we have a 5+++++ Google review rating.

It reflects not just what we say, but how we work alongside business owners to deliver outcomes.

Whether through:

- 1 to 1 business coaching
- Think Tank group coaching
- Succession and strategic group programmes

Visit www.theengine.biz or contact businessadvice@theengine.biz to get the conversation started.

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THE DIAL IS MOVING

From conversation to action in the fight for global standard treatment for triple negative breast cancer

There are moments in advocacy where it feels like nothing is shifting. And then there are moments where you can see it. Right now, we are seeing movement.

Not the final outcome.

Not the resolution. **But movement.**

And that matters.

Because change at this level does not happen overnight. It happens through consistent pressure, clear messaging, and people willing to show up and have the conversations that count.



World Triple Negative Breast Cancer Day NZ | Advocacy for Global Standard Treatment | Catherine Cooke

[click picture below to watch this incredible 90 min online event attended by over 400 people].



World Triple Negative Breast Cancer Day was not just about awareness this year. It was about connection, visibility and ensuring the reality of this diagnosis is understood beyond statistics.

Catherine Cooke brought together patients, lived experience, and voices that needed to be heard. These were real stories from women navigating breast cancer, supported by sister survivors, financial pressure, uncertainty and the fight for access to globally recognised treatment. Todd Stephenson & Nancy Lu, MPs participated. The strength in that room was undeniable. But more importantly, so was the message. This is not a future issue. This is happening now. And it requires action. If you watched this event, we encourage you to ask your MP a simple but important question: **Will global standard medicine be funded for me when I - or someone I love - needs it?** Because diagnosis alone is not enough. Patients deserve access to treatment that gives them a fighting chance to live.

TAKING THE CONVERSATION TO DECISION MAKERS

I spoke directly with David Seymour and Todd Stephenson the night before World TNBC Day. These were not surface level discussions. They were grounded in:

- **The reality of triple negative breast cancer in New Zealand**
- **The cost of treatment for patients and families**
- **The importance of “invest to save” through early intervention**
- **The broader impact across health, welfare and economic systems**

What mattered most was not just being heard, but being engaged with. There was acknowledgement. There was curiosity. **And there was a willingness to understand the wider implications and the need for David to secure the funding.** This is what progress looks like. Not noise. **Not headlines. But direct, informed conversation with those in a position to influence change.**

TAKEN TO THE GENERAL DEBATE CHAMBER

The following day, Todd Stephenson took this matter into the General Debate Chamber of Parliament. That matters.

Because advocacy is not just about raising awareness. It is about ensuring those conversations are carried into the rooms where decisions are made.

The dial is moving. This is what happens when:

- Patients speak up
- Citizens stand together
- Politicians listen and act
- Conversations turn into representation

This is what action looks like when we work together. Watch the video below.



[Connect with Catherine here on LinkedIn to see her posts on Advocacy or reach out to her for a chat catherinec@theengine.biz](#)

Let's have some fireside chats on what's happening at The Engine - Part 1



TRUST THE PROCESS, NOT THE NOISE

We are currently working with a client who has been pursuing \$250,000 owed to them. This is now the second statutory demand issued. The first was withdrawn in good faith after an agreement was reached, but payment never followed. What we are now seeing is a familiar pattern. The debtor continues to engage just enough to delay, to manipulate the process, and to avoid the consequences of liquidation. Conversations, promises, partial engagement, all designed to buy time without resolving the issue. Meanwhile, the reality remains unchanged. The money has not been paid.

Our advice has been consistent. Stop engaging. Stop negotiating in circles. Trust the legal process that is already in motion. If the debtor truly does not want to be liquidated, they will find the money. That is the commercial reality. As business owners, it can be difficult to step back, especially when the situation feels personal or urgent. But this is where trusting the professionals you have engaged becomes critical. Let them do their job. Stay focused on your business as usual. Protect your time, your energy, and your decision-making. Because the longer you stay in the noise, the further you are pulled away from running your business.

JOINING FORCES — OPPORTUNITY OR RISK?

We are currently advising a business owner exploring the idea of joining forces with another business. On the surface, the opportunity is compelling. Shared capability, expanded market reach, complementary strengths and the ability to scale faster together than alone. These types of conversations often come with energy and optimism, and rightly so. But what sits beneath that initial alignment is where the real work begins. Because while strategy may align at the top, differences in leadership style, decision-making, risk appetite and expectations can quickly surface once the relationship moves from conversation to execution.

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Our advice has been clear. Before anything is formalised, the groundwork must be done properly. That means getting absolute clarity on roles, responsibilities, financial contribution, profit distribution, decision rights and what happens when things do not go to plan. The pros are obvious. Growth, leverage and shared momentum. The cons, if not structured correctly, are equally significant. Misalignment, tension, diluted control and potential dispute. The opportunity is real, but only if it is built on structure. This is where a well-constructed shareholders agreement becomes critical. Not just as a legal formality, but as a commercial framework that protects both parties, defines the relationship from the outset and provides a clear pathway forward. Because partnerships don't fail at the beginning. They fail when expectations were never clearly agreed in the first place **and outside experience is critical in asking the questions or creating thought process not considered.**

WHEN AN EMPLOYEE DISENGAGES DURING A PERFORMANCE PLAN

We are currently working with a business navigating a situation where an employee, placed on a personal development performance plan, has chosen to disengage rather than lean in. Initially, the intent was clear. Provide structure, support and a pathway to improve performance. The plan was documented, expectations were outlined, and regular check-ins were in place. But instead of engaging with the process, the employee has stepped back. Communication has reduced, accountability has slipped, and the responsibility to improve has not been taken up.

This is not uncommon. A performance plan requires effort from both sides. The employer must be clear, fair and consistent. The employee must choose to participate. When that choice is not made, the situation shifts. It becomes less about development and more about managing risk, process and outcome. Our advice in these situations is to remain disciplined. Follow the process, document everything, and ensure each step is fair, reasonable and transparent. Do not be drawn into emotion or inconsistency. A well-run performance process protects both the business and the individual. But it also brings clarity. Either the employee steps up, or the business steps forward.

In this case, the business has stepped forward with our involvement and we are navigating a structured outcome that allows both parties to move forward safely. Our impartial approach and knowledge of HR process brings clarity, keeps conversations on track, avoids inaction and significantly reduces the risk of a personal grievance.

Let's have some fireside chats on what's happening at The Engine - Part 2



THE SALE IS NOT THE END — IT'S THE START OF YOUR NEXT ONE

We are currently working with a business that has done the hard part well. They win the work, deliver a quality outcome, and have satisfied clients at the end of each job. But like many businesses, the process stopped there. No structured follow-up, no consistent request for feedback, no system to turn a completed job into a review, referral or repeat work. The opportunity was there every time. It just wasn't being captured.

This is where many businesses leave value on the table. A sales strategy that focuses only on winning work is incomplete. The real leverage sits in what happens after the job is finished. Reviews build credibility, referrals reduce acquisition cost, and repeat clients create stability. But none of this happens by chance. It requires a clear aftersales strategy, a simple plan, and the discipline to execute it consistently. It also requires a commitment of time. Not a lot, but enough to follow through properly. Because the businesses that grow sustainably are not just good at selling. They are disciplined in what happens after the sale.

YOU HAVE HUNDREDS OF EMPLOYEES — BUT NO VOICE

We are working with a business that employs hundreds of people, yet has very little visibility in the market. No consistent presence, no amplification of the work they are doing, and most importantly, no activation of the people inside the business. From the outside, you would not know the scale, capability or impact they have. From the inside, employees are turning up, doing their jobs, and leaving. There is no clear connection between what they do each day and the story of the business they are part of.

This is a missed opportunity.

Your employees are your most powerful brand ambassadors. They are the ones delivering the service, interacting with clients, and shaping how your business is experienced every day. But they will only promote where they feel proud, connected and clear on what the business stands for. That does not happen by accident. It requires leadership to communicate clearly, recognise contribution, create a sense of belonging, and give people something to stand behind. When done well, employees do not just work for the business. They advocate for it. They talk about it, share it, and attract others to it.

Turning employees into promoters is not about telling them to post on social media. It is about building a culture where they want to. Where they understand the direction of the business, feel valued in their role, and can see how their contribution matters. When that alignment exists, visibility follows naturally. And when your people are proud of where they work, your business stops being invisible.

RUDDERLESS SHIPS

We continue to see businesses come to us with no clear leader at the helm. Decisions delayed, accountability blurred, teams unsure who is driving direction. The result is a business that looks busy on the surface, but underneath is drifting.

In one case, a growing business stalled completely. Revenue flatlined, senior staff began making conflicting decisions, and the owner was caught in day-to-day noise with no strategic control. In another, a well-established business experienced margin erosion and team frustration because no one was holding the line on performance or priorities. In both cases, once leadership was clarified and accountability reinstated, direction returned, decisions were made faster, and the business regained momentum.

CRUCIAL ADVICE DON'T WAIT UNTIL YEAR END

We are approaching year end again, and one of the simplest yet most overlooked actions is speaking with your accountant now about your likely tax position. Do you know what you may owe, and have you considered whether there are legitimate, planned purchases or decisions that could be made before balance date to manage that position? **Talking to your accountant after 31/03/26 is not strategy, it is history.**

Contact us at businessadvice@theengine.biz to get the conversation started as to how we can help.



Best intentions without accountability

Feb 20, 2026 | Newsletter

Best intentions without accountability = ZERO OUTPUT We kick off this newsletter discussing why strategy without structure is costing businesses more than they realise. Across the last quarter of last year, business commentary in the NZ Herald, RNZ and Stuff has...

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Don't Drift into 2026. Lead into it.

Dec 18, 2025 | Newsletter

2025 Year-End Wrap: Better Thinking, Better Businesses A Message to Our Business Owner Community As we close out the year, we want to pause and acknowledge something we don't often make time for in business - reflection. 2025 has been a year of challenge,...

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Strengthen. Scale. Succeed.

Oct 20, 2025 | Newsletter

Ready to spark a series of lightbulb moments to propel you forward? Doing business year after year can be lonely and you only know what you know. Up your game by investing in your personal development and building sustainable business growth. Join us on a journey with...

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When the stack of cards falls like dominoes

Oct 10, 2025 | Newsletter

When the stack of cards falls like dominoes Every business owner knows the feeling of the long hours, the endless juggling, the constant drive to keep everything upright. You're so deep in the trenches that you barely notice the cracks forming until the stack of...

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Click on the read more for each newsletter below. All newsletters are [here](#).



Change Starts with You

Sep 22, 2025 | Newsletter

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...

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Strong finish to 2026. Stronger start to 2027.

Aug 18, 2025 | Newsletter

Strong finish to 2026. Stronger start to 2027. Navigating the critical months ahead - to not take action will leave your business on the hamster wheel Last month's newsletter sparked plenty of conversations, calls and action around The Engine's Business Warrant of...

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Is your business really fit for the road ahead?

Jul 18, 2025 | Newsletter

Is your business really fit for the road ahead? Would you pass a business warrant of fitness? With many companies falling over and equally many more barely with a pulse, having a business warrant of fitness completed by The Engine Limited could not be more relevant...

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What's my endgame? The one question business owners often forget to ask when starting out

Jun 18, 2025 | Newsletter

What's my endgame? The one question business owners often forget to ask when starting out When you start a business, it's usually about the idea, the opportunity, or simply the urgency of needing to make a living. You jump in, energised by possibility, fuelled by...

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Structure. Clarity. A Solid Plan... and Someone to hold you to it.

May 14, 2025 | Newsletter

Structure. Clarity. A Solid Plan... and Someone to hold you to it. In business, drifting is dangerous. Without a clear structure, focused direction, and someone to challenge the status quo, even the most promising ventures can lose momentum. As seasoned business...

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This Was Meant to Reach You: Turning Motion into Momentum

Jan 16, 2025 | Newsletter

This Was Meant to Reach You: Turning Motion into Momentum The Mountain is You: Plan, Pivot, and Prosper in 2025 Are you busy in the trenches, or are you moving your business forward? There's a difference, and it's one I see too often in businesses stuck in a cycle of...

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UNLEASH YOUR BUSINESS POTENTIAL WITH



New Zealand's Best Holistic Business Advisors & Specialist Provider Community

“ Client Testimonial ”

★★★★★

Catherine and The Engine have helped my company immensely. Being a small family run landscaping company, you may not think that having a business advisor would be very beneficial, or worthwhile. However Catherine's advisory knowledge and hands on assistance to the small (and large) problems being a small company owner brings with it every day, allows me more time to focus on making dream gardens for clients. Through the uncertain times recently Catherine has acted as a safety net for my business, and has been a pragmatic source for advice. I would highly recommend The Engine to those who like assurance, and having someone on board 24/7 who you can rely on in the inevitable tough times to come.

 **Darrell Smith**
Director, Landsmiths

View The Engine's full library of resources and tips from our Provider network for helpful information on a range of business topics.

[Full Resource Library](#)

***Business advisory, consulting, education
& governance for growth-focused business owners***

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