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POWERING BUSINESS RESULTS

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**Next Think Tank Group Coaching starting June
(click picture above to watch the video)**

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LinkedIn Live: Episode 15 - The Engine's Employee Engagement Solutions.

Fuel Pressure is Real. Leadership Matters More.

The hidden cost of the Fuel Crisis (and what smart businesses are doing with our help.)

Knowledge is Power | Navigating Pressure with Perspective

Right now, more than ever, businesses are feeling the flow-on effects of rising fuel costs. But it's not just showing up on balance sheets. It's showing up in behaviour. In mindset. In decisions your people are making every single day. We're seeing it play out in real time with hybrid teams. Employees are questioning their days in the office. Leaders are questioning productivity, culture, and connection. And somewhere in the middle... tension builds.

The Reality Check

One of the most powerful things we've done recently is simply sit down with teams and do the maths. Not assumptions. Not emotion. Just facts. In one case, the perceived "significant" increase in commuting costs equated to \$7 per week. Seven dollars. But left unchecked, that perception was driving resistance to coming into the office — impacting collaboration, culture, and ultimately performance.

The Leadership Lesson

This is where grounded, external influence matters. Because when you're inside the business, these conversations can become emotional, political, or avoided altogether. An outside lens brings:

- Objectivity
- Clarity
- Commercial thinking
- And the ability to reframe without bias
-

It's not about dismissing concerns - it's about right-sizing them and then solving them together.

The Engine Business News

Leading Holistic Business Advisors & Specialists
Business Insights Quarter 2 - 04/26



Solution Thinking in Action

We're seeing smart businesses lean into practical solution, not just policies.

One of the strongest examples is our sharing and business engagement with

[Auckland Transport's Fareshare programme](#)

Fareshare allows employers to subsidise public transport for their teams reducing:

- Fuel spend
- Parking costs
- Daily commuting stress

And importantly, it creates a shared commitment:

- Employers support their people
- Employees re-engage with the workplace

This is what good leadership looks like, not choosing sides, but creating win-win outcomes.

The Bigger Picture

If we allow external pressures like fuel costs to drive internal behaviour unchecked, we risk:

- Eroding culture
- Weakening connection
- Reducing performance

But if we meet those pressures with clarity, data, and grounded leadership, we:

- Strengthen trust
- Build resilience
- And make better commercial decisions

This is the work.

Not reacting.

Not avoiding.

But stepping in — with perspective.

Because in times like these, knowledge isn't just power — it's leadership.

If you're seeing shifts in behaviour across your team and want an objective, commercial lens to navigate it — let's talk.

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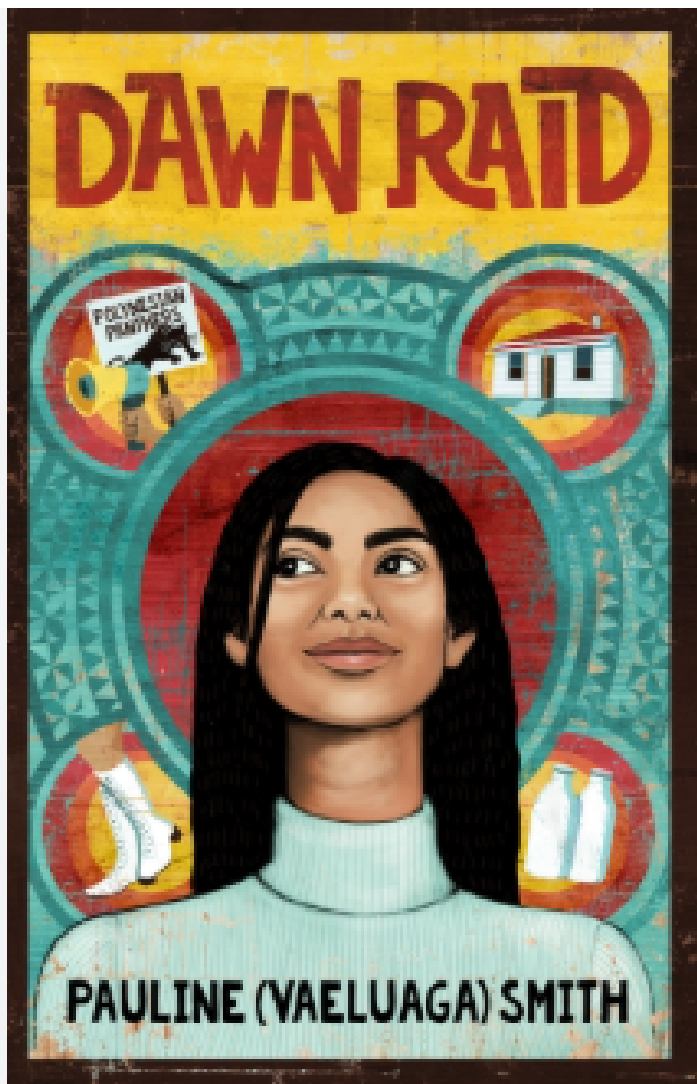
Learn more [here](#).

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.



Shaping Legacy from the End Game Back

There are moments in business that remind you why you do what you do.

Working alongside Pauline (Vaeluaga) Smith over the past couple of weeks has been one of those moments. Pauline, based in Riverton in Southland, is the author of *Dawn Raid* — a powerful book written through the eyes of an 11-year-old girl in 1971. On the surface, it captures the innocence of childhood — small-town life, school, and everyday moments. But beneath that, it brings to life a far more significant chapter in New Zealand's history.

The Dawn Raids of the 1970s were discriminatory immigration actions that disproportionately targeted Pacific peoples, despite them not being the majority of overstayers. It is a part of our history that still carries weight today, formally acknowledged by the Government in 2021. Pauline's work doesn't just tell this story — it allows people to feel it, understand it, and connect to it in a deeply human way.

As a business coach, I spend much of my time working with leaders on strategy, structure, and growth. But what stood out to me most in working with Pauline wasn't just the opportunity ahead — it was the person behind the work.

Pauline sent me a signed copy of her book with two thoughtful, personal notes. A simple gesture, but one that spoke volumes. She took the time to understand me, to ask how I was, and to connect beyond the business conversation. That level of humility and care is rare — and it's exactly the kind of foundation strong, enduring brands are built on.

Because building a business — or a brand — isn't just about what you do. It's about how you show up.

At The Engine, we talk a lot about shaping a business with the end game in mind. Not just growth for growth's sake, but building something of real value — something that can transition, evolve, or be handed on with integrity.



When you understand where you are going, you can build the value proposition in the middle with far greater clarity and intent. ***That's what legacy work looks like.***

Pauline is already doing that through her writing — creating impact, raising awareness, and contributing something meaningful that will stand the test of time. Now, the opportunity is to shape that into a legacy brand that continues to grow, reach, and influence.

Dawn Raid is available online and in most bookstores. I would encourage you to read it.

And Pauline — thank you. For your work, your care, and the way you show up.

This is just the beginning.

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Featured in Audacious: When Your Story Becomes Something Bigger Than You

There are moments in life where everything collides. Grief, gratitude, reflection and purpose all arrive at once, and you are left sitting in it, feeling every layer.

Receiving Audacious Vol. 2 was one of those moments. On a day where I was already carrying the weight of remembering three incredible people who are no longer here, I opened the door to something that felt almost surreal. To hold my story in my hands, printed and shared alongside other extraordinary women, stopped me in my tracks.

Because this was never just about being featured in a magazine.

It was about seeing a life that has been anything but linear, told with honesty, care and truth. It was about someone taking the time to truly understand the depth behind the milestones, the battles behind the headlines, and the resilience that often goes unseen.

Ali Bond did exactly that.

She didn't just write my story. She honoured it. She captured not only what has happened, but what it has meant. The decisions, the consequences, the moments that shape you and the ones that nearly break you.

When I read it, I felt it. Some parts still cut deep. Some parts made me incredibly proud. And some parts reminded me just how far I've come. ***Because my story is not one of simple success.***

It is one of building something from nothing. Growing a business from a handful of people to nearly 100. Securing global opportunities people said would never happen. Standing on a world stage and proving that New Zealand could do what others thought was impossible.

And then losing it all.

To fraud. To decisions that weren't mine. To systems that didn't protect. To a narrative that was shaped without the full truth.

Rebuilding from that is not just about business. It is about identity. Reputation. Strength. It is about choosing not to disappear when it would have been easier to do so.

And then 12 years on came cancer.

A diagnosis that shifts everything. One that brings you face to face with your own mortality, with the limitations of a health system, and with the reality that survival can come at an extraordinary cost.



It is in those moments that you decide who you are.

For me, I made that decision a long time ago. I will not become what tries to break me. I will become the opposite. That is something Audacious captures so powerfully, not just in my story, but across every woman featured. This is what makes this publication so important. Audacious is not about surface-level success or curated perfection. It is about real women, real experiences and real courage. It brings to life the stories that so often go untold. Stories of resilience, of loss, of rebuilding, of finding strength in the most unlikely places. It creates a space where women can see themselves reflected. Where they can feel understood. Where they can be inspired not because everything is perfect, but because it isn't. If you are looking for something that will move you, challenge you, and remind you of the strength that exists within all of us, this is it.

You can read my full story by subscribing here:

<https://www.audaciousmagazine.com/>



Profit Is Tight. Risk Is Higher. Standards Must Lift.

Knowledge is Power | Protecting Margin, Reputation & Outcomes

At The Engine, we are increasingly being brought into situations where projects are under pressure, not because of capability, but because of late payments and disputed or unapproved variations.

And we're going to be very clear.
We are taking a hard line on this.

Because in today's environment, margin is already tight. When payment discipline slips, profit erodes quickly and risk escalates even faster.

What we're seeing

Across multiple construction businesses, the patterns are consistent:

- Variations completed without formal approval, then disputed
- Payments delayed well beyond agreed terms
- Silence or avoidance instead of proactive communication
- Tension building between contractor and client, often unnecessarily

What starts as a commercial disagreement quickly becomes something much bigger:

- Strained relationships
- Cashflow pressure
- Legal positioning

The Reality

Let's be direct. Avoidance is expensive. When issues are not addressed early, they often escalate to formal proceedings — and at that point:

- Legal costs mount quickly
- Time is lost
- Focus is pulled away from running the business
- And outcomes are rarely optimal for either party

In many cases, the cost of defending a position far outweighs the cost of simply fronting up early and resolving it properly.

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The Better Way

Strong operators understand this:

If there is an issue — address it.

- If there are concerns about workmanship → raise them early
- If a variation is unclear → clarify and document it
- If payment is being held back → communicate why
- If cashflow is tight → have the conversation



Because more often than not, these situations are resolvable when handled early, directly, and commercially.

The Role of Reputation

In this sector, reputation is everything.

It is built over years — and can be undermined quickly through:

- Poor communication
- Lack of transparency
- Or failure to honour commitments

The businesses that consistently perform are not those who avoid difficult conversations —

they are the ones who lean into them early and resolve them well. 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.

Where The Engine comes in

This is where having a neutral, commercially grounded partner changes everything.

At The Engine, we sit between parties to:

- Bring objectivity to the situation
- Strip away emotion and focus on facts
- Facilitate direct, solution-focused conversations
- Drive outcomes that protect both margin and relationships

Because the difference is clear:

Without intervention → issues drag on, positions harden, costs escalate

With the right intervention → outcomes are faster, clearer, and commercially smarter

The construction environment is only getting tighter.

If you are dealing with delayed payments, disputed variations, or growing commercial tension on a project — engage early. A short, direct conversation now can prevent a long, costly process later.

Let's resolve it properly. Reach out to us [here](#).



BUILD YOUR BRAND

Building a Brand Without an Exit Strategy Is a Risk You Can't Afford

Most business owners think about brand as visibility. Logo. Website. Social presence. Market positioning.

But the strongest brands, the ones that endure, scale, and sell, are built with one thing in mind from the outset.

The end game.

Because if your brand is not aligned to your succession or exit strategy, you are not building an asset.

You are building dependency.

The Reality Most Business Owners Avoid

At some point, every business owner will exit. Whether that's a sale, a handover, a leadership transition, or stepping back from day-to-day operations.

The question is not if. The question is how prepared you are when that moment comes. And here's where many fall short.

They've built a business that relies heavily on them. Their relationships, their knowledge, their presence. Which means when they step away, the value steps away with them.

Brand Equals Transferable Value

A well-built brand is not about you. It's about what can stand without you. Your brand should clearly communicate what you do, who you do it for, why you are different, and the value you consistently deliver. When this is done well, your business becomes easier to understand, easier to trust, and critically, easier to transition or sell.

Because buyers, partners, or successors are not buying you. They are buying systems, reputation, market position, and predictable outcomes.

Your value proposition is everything

If your value proposition is unclear, inconsistent, or reliant on personality, it weakens your position.

Strong brands are built on clear commercial outcomes, defined customer segments, consistent messaging, and proven results.

This creates confidence. And confidence drives value.

What we're doing differently

We've been working closely with a number of individuals and businesses on this exact challenge, moving from visibility to strategic brand positioning with an exit lens. This isn't about more content.

It's about refining the narrative, anchoring it in real lived experience, aligning it with commercial outcomes, and building a platform that can scale beyond the individual.

We are seeing powerful shifts when the story is authentic but structured, the positioning is clear and owned, and the brand is intentionally built as an asset, not an extension of personality.

Because when done right, brand becomes a growth lever, a trust signal, and a value multiplier.

The Bottom Line

If your brand cannot operate without you, it is not ready for succession or exit. And in today's environment, that is a risk.

The businesses that will win are those that build with intent, lead with clarity, and create something that can stand, scale, and transfer.

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. 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

THE FEROCIOUS ADVOCATE

Pushing boundaries. A gift that keeps giving.



A year ago, Catherine Cooke was lying in an Auckland hospital bed on death's door. Three blood transfusions. A body pushed beyond its limits. And a moment that would stay with her forever... being told to get up and walk to the toilet when she physically couldn't, because "others were worse."

That was her reality.

But in that same bed, stripped of everything, Catherine did what she has always done. She fought. Not just for herself, but for others. From that hospital ward, she drove forward a petition that would go on to gain 17,096 signatures. A call for funded Keytruda for triple negative breast cancer, a global standard treatment available in over 40 countries, yet still not funded in New Zealand. A petition that today still sits in Parliament, unanswered.

For Catherine, it was never just a petition. It was survival. It was defiance. It was purpose. Her advocacy did not begin there, and it has not stopped since.

From national platforms such as Radio New Zealand, Catherine has used her voice to challenge the system. In her powerful interview on Checkpoint, she made it clear that surface-level solutions are not enough. Infusion centres alone do not solve the deeper issue. Access to life-saving medicines does. Her message is consistent. We must shift from conversations about cost to conversations about value. Because behind every delayed decision is a life, a family, a future. **CLICK BELOW PICTURE TO LISTEN.**

Infusion centres not solution - cancer survivor

From Checkpoint, 5:06 pm on 14 April 2026

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Checkpoint 14 April 2026
Infusion centres not solution - cancer survivor

The government is opening 14 new infusion centres around the country, where patients can get chemotherapy and other therapies. It's also expanding 14 existing infusion centres. The Health Minister said a boost in Pharmac funding that same year is delivering 66 new medicines including 33 cancer treatments, increasing the need for infusions. Triple negative breast cancer survivor, Catherine Cooke, slammed the announcement saying without medications like Keytruda, funded for early stage cancers, more infusion centres are not the solution and patients are being driven into debt to survive. Cooke spoke to Lisa Owen.

And Catherine doesn't just speak. She acts.

Within 48 hours of hearing about a solo mother of four young children who had been denied access to the very medicine she should have been offered, even unfunded, Catherine mobilised this mum's story across New Zealand.

\$24,000 was raised in two days.

Not because it was easy. But because it was necessary. Because no mother should have to fight that hard just to stay alive for her children.

This is the work of a ferocious advocate.

Not loud for the sake of it, but relentless where it matters.

Catherine's advocacy extends far beyond her own story. It is about a nation. It is about equity. It is about ensuring New Zealand, and the Pacific communities it supports, are not left behind when it comes to standard of care.

She continues to challenge policymakers, engage with decision-makers, and build a body of evidence that proves early intervention is not just humane, it is economically responsible. Investing in access saves lives and reduces long-term societal cost.

And yet, the work remains unfinished.

Because advocacy of this kind is not a moment. It is a movement. **A gift that keeps giving.**

Today, Catherine stands not just as a survivor, but as a voice for thousands who do not yet have one. Pushing boundaries. Calling for accountability. And refusing to accept a system where survival depends on luck, timing, or the ability to pay.

**From a hospital bed... to national influence.
From survival... to impact.
And she is far from done.**

To give to Amber Rose, the solo mum do so [here](#).

[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 business chats



CASHFLOW PRESSURE HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

A business came to us profitable on paper, but constantly under pressure. Suppliers were being stretched, GST was a scramble, and payroll timing was tight. There was no visibility beyond the current week. We implemented a simple rolling cashflow forecast and tightened debtor follow up. Within a month, the pressure reduced and decisions became proactive, not reactive. Profit didn't change. Control did. **We went on to deliver The Engine's Business Warrant of Fitness Audit across the entire business.**

VALUES ARE ONLY REAL IF THEY SHOW UP IN BEHAVIOUR

We worked with a business that proudly displayed their values across their website and office, yet internally there was inconsistency in how people showed up. Performance issues were tolerated, accountability was selective, and behaviour did not always align with what was being promoted. We worked with leadership to define what those values actually looked like in practice. What was acceptable, what was not, and how it would be addressed.

Once behaviour was aligned to values, the shift was noticeable. Team clarity improved, standards lifted, and culture strengthened. Values are not what you write on the wall. They are what you consistently allow and reinforce.

UNDERPRICED AND OVERWORKED

A business had absorbed rising costs for over a year. Fuel, wages and materials had all increased, but pricing had not kept pace. The team was busy, jobs were flowing, yet margins continued to tighten and cash was not improving. The owner felt like they were working harder for less. We reviewed pricing, cost inputs and job margins, then implemented a structured price adjustment supported by clear client communication. The result was immediate. Margins improved, pressure reduced, and the same level of work delivered stronger outcomes. The issue was never volume. It was pricing discipline and the confidence to act.

COMPLIANCE IS NOT OPTIONAL — IT IS THE COST OF STAYING IN BUSINESS

We are seeing a growing number of businesses caught off guard by compliance. Not because they chose to ignore it, but because it was never given the attention it required. It sat in the background. Something to get to later. Something handled in isolation. Something assumed to be "under control."

Until it isn't.

Compliance is not just about ticking boxes. It sits across employment, health and safety, financial reporting, contracts, immigration, tax and governance. It is woven through the entire business. And when it is not structured properly, the risk does not sit in one place. It shows up everywhere.

We worked with a business that had grown quickly. Revenue was strong, the team had expanded, and work was flowing. But underneath that growth, compliance had not kept pace. Employment agreements were inconsistent, documentation was incomplete, and processes relied heavily on trust rather than structure.

When an issue arose, what should have been a manageable situation escalated quickly because the foundations were not in place.

Another business came to us following an external inquiry. They believed they had done everything right. But when documentation was requested, it was fragmented. Systems were not aligned. Responsibility sat across multiple people with no clear ownership. The stress and time involved in responding was significant, not because they were deliberately non-compliant, but because they could not clearly demonstrate that they were compliant.

That is the key point.

Compliance is not just about doing the right thing. It is about being able to prove you have done the right thing. And that requires structure. The challenge for many business owners is that compliance does not feel urgent. It does not directly generate revenue. It does not sit at the front of the business. So it is often deprioritised in favour of sales, delivery and growth. But when compliance becomes urgent, it is already too late. At that point, it is reactive. It is costly. Distracting.

Because staying in business is not just about winning work. It is about ensuring you are structured to keep it.



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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