

STEVEN BARTLETT

**THE
DIARY
OF A
CEO**

**THE 33 LAWS OF
BUSINESS & LIFE**

Praise for *The Diary of a CEO*

‘There is a new breed of CEO taking over the business world. The blustery, chest-beating CEOs who act like they make no mistakes are being replaced by CEOs who talk about their feelings, lead with curiosity and are willing to work on themselves . . . and Steven Bartlett is leading the revolution! *The Diary of a CEO* is an essential companion for any leader who wants to take themselves on and lead us into the next generation.’

Simon Sinek, optimist and New York Times bestselling author of Start with Why and The Infinite Game

‘I’ve watched Steven Bartlett’s journey from the start, always knowing he had that raw, fiery spark. Seeing him harness it, seeing him succeed, damn, it fills me with pure, undiluted pride. I’m on the sidelines, cheering him on, because this guy embodies the entrepreneur’s spirit.’

Gary Vaynerchuck, CEO of VaynerMedia and New York Times bestselling author

‘Steven Bartlett has overcome seemingly insurmountable odds to become a mega-successful serial entrepreneur. Along the way, he has learned some valuable lessons about the importance of following a different and unconventional path to power, synthesizing his experience into practical laws that will challenge and guide you in the harshly competitive world we live in.’

Robert Greene, bestselling author of Mastery

‘Weaving the latest research, his own experiences, and captivating stories, Bartlett guides readers to redefine success and achieve their potential. This is a must read for anyone dreaming of doing something audacious.’

*Jay Shetty, New York Times bestselling author and award-winning host of
On Purpose*

‘Surprising and persuasive in equal measure. Bartlett’s advice will supercharge your chances of achieving your biggest dreams.’

*Marie Forleo, New York Times bestselling author of Everything Is
Figureoutable*

‘From “never disagree” to “don’t attack beliefs, inspire new ones,” this book contains surprising wisdom that will move you forward personally and professionally. I highly recommend.’

*Scott Galloway, professor of Marketing at NYU Stern School of Business
and bestselling author of Adrift*

‘It’s about time that we read about success in our modern world as seen by one who’s navigated the path to success like no other. Intelligent, insightful, and real. I am humbled by how much I learned from Steven’s work.’

Mo Gawdat, bestselling author and founder of OneBillionHappy

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Dedicated to everyone that listens to and watches

The Diary Of A CEO!

Thank you for allowing us to live the greatest dream we never had.

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INTRODUCTION:

WHO AM I TO WRITE THIS BOOK?

I've been the CEO, founder, co-founder or board member of four industry-leading companies that collectively – at their peaks – reached a cumulative valuation of more than \$1 billion.

I'm currently the founder of Flight Story, an innovative marketing agency; thirdweb, a software company; and an investment fund called Flight Fund.

My companies have employed thousands of people in every corner of the world. I've raised almost \$100 million of investment for my companies.

I'm an investor in more than 40 companies. I'm on the board of four companies, two of which are currently at the forefront of their respective industries, and I'm 30 years old.

Being the founder of two successful marketing groups that have risen to the top of their industry, within their market, has meant that I spend much of my professional life in boardrooms working with and advising the CEOs, CMOs and leaders of the biggest brands in the world on how to do marketing and how to tell their story online; Uber, Apple, Coca-Cola, Nike, Amazon, TikTok, Logitech, you name it – they have been my clients.

Additionally, I've spent the last four years interviewing the world's most successful individuals from business, sports, entertainment and academia. I have 700 hours of recordings where I've interviewed your favourite authors, actors and CMOs; the world's leading neuroscientists; the captain of your favourite sports team; the manager of your favourite sports team; the CEOs

of the billion-dollar companies you use every day; and more of the world's leading psychologists than I could possibly name.

I published these conversations in the form of a podcast called *The Diary Of A CEO*, and that podcast quickly became the most downloaded podcast here in Europe and one of the top business podcasts in the USA, Ireland, Australia and the Middle East. It is arguably one of the fastest-growing podcasts in the world right now, increasing its listenership by 825 per cent last year alone.

I've been lucky enough to be exposed to some unique experiences, and a few years ago it dawned on me how much valuable and powerful information I've gained – and only a handful of people on earth have access to that information. I also realised that at the very heart of all the success and failure I've seen, both in my own entrepreneurial journey and the hundreds of interviews I've conducted, were a set of laws that could stand the test of time, transfer to any industry, and be used by anyone who is trying to build something great or become someone great.

This is not a book about business strategy. Strategy changes like the seasons. This is a book about something much more permanent. This is a book about the fundamental, enduring laws of building great things and becoming great yourself.

These laws can be used by anyone, regardless of your industry or occupation.

These laws will work now or 100 years from now.

These laws are rooted in psychology, science and centuries of research, and to further validate these laws I surveyed tens of thousands of people across every continent, every age group and every profession.



The design of this book is based on five core beliefs:

1. I believe most books are longer than they need to be.
2. I believe most books are more complicated than they need to be.
3. I believe pictures paint a thousand words.
4. I believe stories are more powerful than data, but both are important.
5. I believe in nuance and that the truth is often somewhere in the middle.

In short, it aims to embody a quote often attributed to Einstein:

'Everything should be as simple as possible, but not simpler.'

To me, this means giving you the fundamental truth and understanding of each law, in the exact number of words necessary to do so – no less, no more – and using powerful imagery and incredible real stories to bring the key points to life.

★THE FOUR PILLARS OF GREATNESS

Becoming great, and building great things, requires mastery within four pillars. I call these the four pillars of greatness.

PILLAR I: THE SELF

As Leonardo da Vinci asserted, 'One can have no smaller or greater mastery than mastery of oneself; you will never have a greater or lesser dominion

than that over yourself; the height of your success is gauged by your self-mastery, the depth of your failure by your self-abandonment. Those who cannot establish dominion over themselves will have no dominion over others.'

This pillar is about you. Your self-awareness, self-control, self-care, self-conduct, self-esteem and self-story. The self is the only thing we have direct control over; to master it, which is no easy task, is to master your entire world.

PILLAR II: THE STORY

Everything that stands in your way is a human. Science, psychology and history have shown that there is no graph, data or information that stands a greater chance of positively influencing those humans than a truly great story.

Stories are the single most powerful weapon any leader can arm themselves with – they are the currency of humanity. Those who tell captivating, inspiring, emotional stories rule the world.

This pillar is about storytelling and how to harness the laws of storytelling to persuade the humans that stand in your way to follow you, to buy from you, to believe you, to trust you, to click, to act, to hear you and to understand you.

PILLAR III: THE PHILOSOPHY

In business, sports and academia, an individual's personal philosophies are the single biggest predictors of how they'll behave, now and in the future – if you know someone's philosophy or beliefs, you can accurately forecast how they'll behave in any situation.

This pillar is about the personal and professional philosophies that great people believe and live by and how those philosophies result in behaviour that leads to greatness. Your philosophy is the set of beliefs, values or

principles that guide your behaviour – they are the fundamental beliefs that underpin your actions.

PILLAR IV: THE TEAM

The definition of the word ‘company’ is ‘group of people’; at its essence, every company, project or organisation is just a group of people. Everything the organisation produces, good or bad, originates from the minds of the members of your group of people. The most important success factor in your work is who you choose to work with.

I’ve never seen anyone build a great company, project or organisation without a group of people, and I’ve never seen anyone reach personal greatness without the support of a group of people.

This pillar is about how to assemble and get the best out of your group of people. Assembling any group of people is not enough; for your group of people to become a truly great team, you need the right people, bound together by the right culture. When you have great people bound by a great culture, the whole team becomes greater than the sum of its parts. When $1 + 1 = 3$, great things happen.

PILLARI
THE SELF

LAW 1

FILL YOUR FIVE BUCKETS IN THE RIGHT ORDER

This law explains the five buckets that determine your human potential, how to fill them and, crucially, in which order you should fill them.

My friend David was in the front garden of his home, enjoying his morning espresso, as a sweaty, confused-looking, panting man in tired gym attire jogged towards him slowly.

The jogging man paused in his stride and greeted my friend David as he struggled to catch his breath. He cracked an unintelligible joke, appeared to laugh frantically at it, then began erratically talking about the spaceship he was building, the microchips he was going to put in monkeys' brains, and the AI-powered house robots he was going to create.

Moments later, the jogging man said goodbye to David, and continued his slow, sweaty trudge down the street.

That sweaty jogging man was Elon Musk. Billionaire founder of Tesla, SpaceX, Neuralink, OpenAI, Paypal, Zip2 and The Boring Company.

Before I revealed the identity of the sweaty jogging man, you may have understandably assumed he was an escapee of the local psychiatric facility, or suffering from some psychotic break. But once you heard his name, all those extraordinary aforementioned ambitions suddenly became believable.

So believable, in fact, that when Elon tells the world of his ambitions, people will blindly give billions of dollars of their children's inheritance to back him, they'll quit their jobs and relocate to work for him, and they'll pre-order his products before he's even created them.

This is because Elon has filled his five buckets – in fact all of the people I've met that possess the power to build truly great things have five brimming buckets.

The sum of these five buckets is the sum of your professional potential. The fullness of these buckets will determine how big, believable and achievable your dreams are to you, and to those that hear them.

Those that achieve great things have spent years, often decades, pouring into these five buckets. Someone fortunate enough to have five full buckets has all the potential needed to change the world.

When you're seeking employment, selecting the next book you want to read or deciding what dream to pursue, you must be aware of how full your buckets are.

★THE FIVE BUCKETS

1. What you know (your knowledge)
2. What you can do (your skills)
3. Who you know (your network)
4. What you have (your resources)
5. What the world thinks of you (your reputation)

At the start of my career, as an 18-year-old start-up founder, I was haunted by a moral question that I couldn't seem to shake: is focusing my time and energy on building a company (which would ultimately enrich me) a more noble pursuit than going back to where I was born in Africa and investing my time and energy in saving even one life?



This question remained at the front of my mind for several years until one chance encounter in New York granted me some much-needed clarity. I attended an event hosted by Radhanath Swami, a world-renowned guru, monk and spiritual leader, at an event he was holding in New York.

As I squeezed in among a sea of the Swami's mesmerised followers, who were starry-eyed and hanging on to his every word in a perfectly still, appreciative silence, the guru asked if anyone in the crowd had a question for him.

I raised my hand. The guru gestured at me to deliver my question. I asked, 'Is building a business, and enriching myself, a more noble pursuit than going back to Africa to try and save lives?'

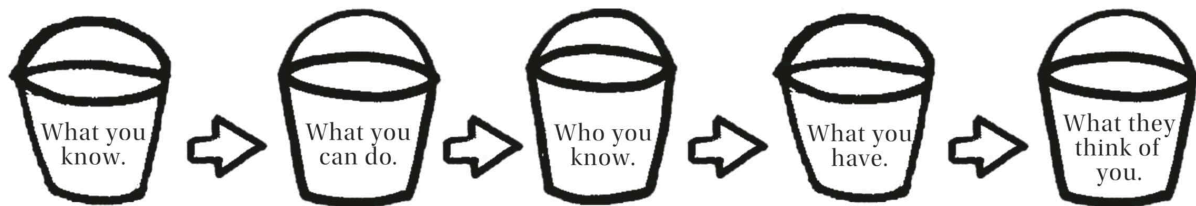
The guru stared at me as if he could see into the depths of my soul, and after a long, blinkless pause he proclaimed: 'You cannot pour from empty buckets.'

Almost a decade on from that moment, it's never been clearer what the guru meant. He was telling me to focus on filling my own buckets, because someone with full buckets can positively bend the world in any way he or she desires.

Having now built several large companies, worked with the biggest organisations in the world, become a multimillionaire, managed thousands of people, read hundreds of books and spent 700 hours interviewing the world's most successful people, my buckets are sufficiently full. Because of this, I now possess the **knowledge, skills, network, resources and reputation** to help millions of people all over the world, which is exactly what I intend to spend the rest of my life doing, through my philanthropic

work, the donations I make, the organisations I create, the media companies I build and the school I'm working to launch.

These five buckets are interconnected – filling one helps to fill another – and they are generally filled in order from left to right.



We usually start our professional life acquiring **knowledge** (school, university, etc.), and when this knowledge is applied, we call it a **skill**. When you have knowledge and skills you become professionally valuable to others and your **network** grows. Consequently, when you have knowledge, skills and a network, your access to **resources** expands, and once you have knowledge, skills, a valuable network and resources, you will undoubtedly earn a **reputation**.

With these five buckets and their interconnected relationship in mind, it's clear that an investment in the first bucket (knowledge) is the highest-yielding investment you can make. Because when that knowledge is applied (skill), it inevitably cascades to fill your remaining buckets.

If you truly understand this, you'll understand that a job that pays you slightly more cash (resources), but gives you far less knowledge and fewer skills, is a lower-paying job.

The force that clouds our ability to act upon this logic is usually ego. Our ego has an incredible ability to persuade us to skip the first two buckets – convincing us to take a job simply for more money (bucket 4) or a job title, status or reputation (bucket 5), without the knowledge (bucket 1) or skills (bucket 2) to succeed in that role.

When we succumb to this temptation, we're building our career on weak foundations. These short-term decisions – your inability to delay your gratification, be patient and invest in your first two buckets – will ultimately catch up with you.

In 2017, a very talented 21-year-old employee called Richard walked into my office and told me he had some news to share with me. He told me that he had been offered a job as CEO of a new marketing company halfway across the world, and that he wanted to leave my company – where he had been flourishing – to take it. He told me the role offered him an enormous pay rise (almost double what we paid him), an equity package and a chance to live in New York City – a far cry from the dreary village he was raised in and an apparent step up from Manchester, England, where he worked for my company.

To be totally frank, I didn't believe him. I couldn't fathom that a legitimate business would offer a junior employee, with no management experience, such a prominent role.

Nonetheless, I accepted his claims and told him that we would support him in his transition out of our company.

It turns out I was wrong – Richard was telling the truth. The job offer did exist and a month later he became CEO of the company, moved to New York and started his new life as a C-suite executive in the Big Apple, leading a team of more than 20 people, in a rapidly growing marketing start-up.

Unfortunately, that is not where the story ends; as life would come to teach both me and Richard, there is no skipping the first two buckets of knowledge and skills if you're playing for long-term, sustainable results. Any attempt to do so is equivalent to building your house on sand.

Within 18 months, the once-promising company Richard had joined had gone under, lost its key employees, run out of money and become shrouded in controversy relating to management practices. After the company closed, Richard was unemployed, far from home, and searching for a new, more junior role, in the same industry that we had employed him in.