

What you celebrate is more important than you think!

WHY  
**PURPOSE**  
MATTERS



**wyseminds**  
your business • your growth

**Picture this**

A new company has been formed, Dragon Backpacks. A great idea that has gone to market and it's moving from the 'forming' to the 'survival' phase<sup>1</sup> where there's initial product interest from early adopters. It's now looking to achieve more so they are seeking desperately to maximise every sale opportunity! Growth is still being built from determination and passion.

**Who is the Team?**

Friends and functional specialists who are equally loyal to the founder as they are to the concept itself.<sup>2</sup>

**What's the culture, the way of working and getting things done?**

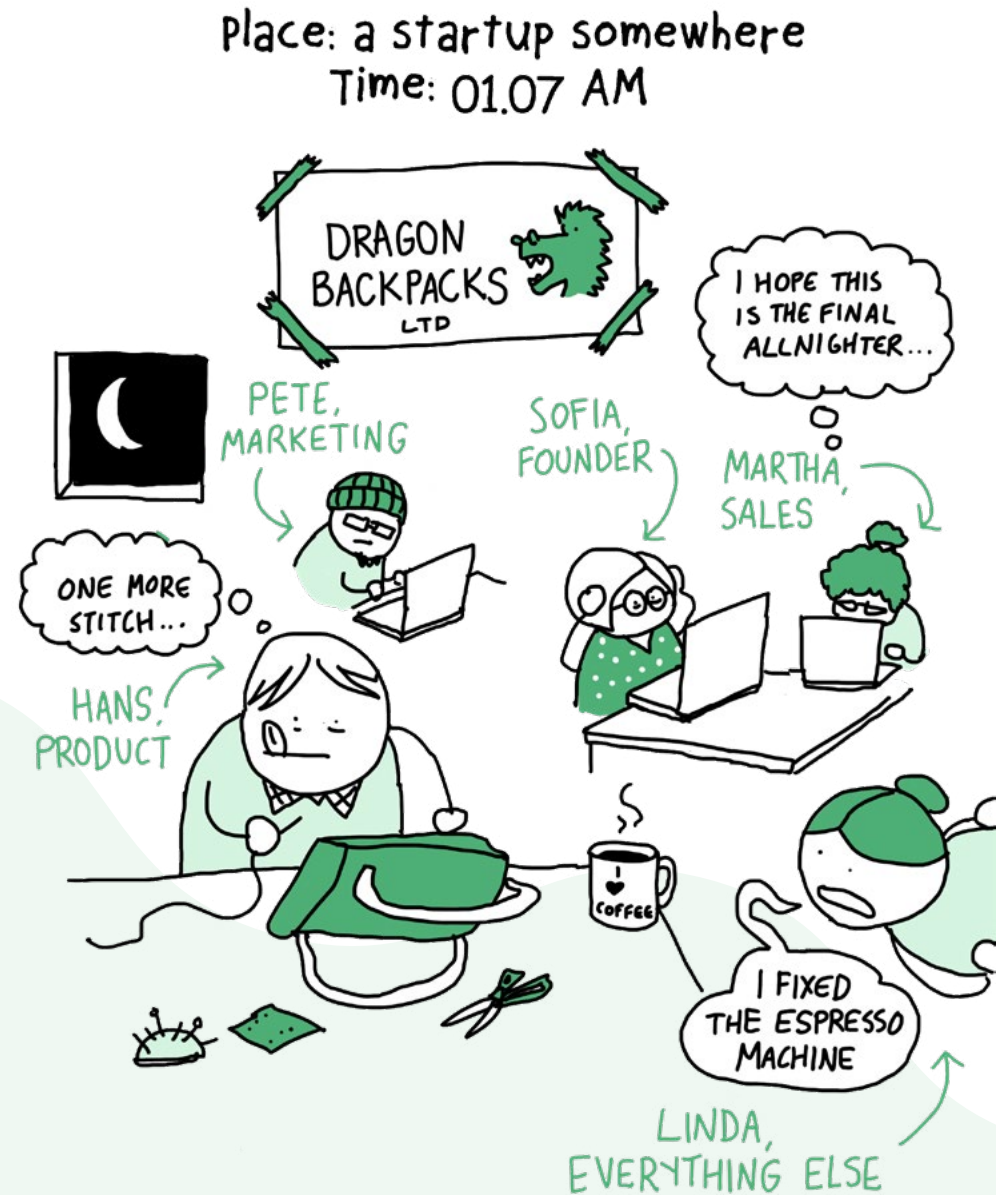
The whole team is in it together and will do whatever is needed to make it a success, on top of what they are employed to do.

1 - Read more about growth phases and the definition of each [here](#).

2 - Read more about organisational structure and how it should change based on the growth phase your company is in [here](#).

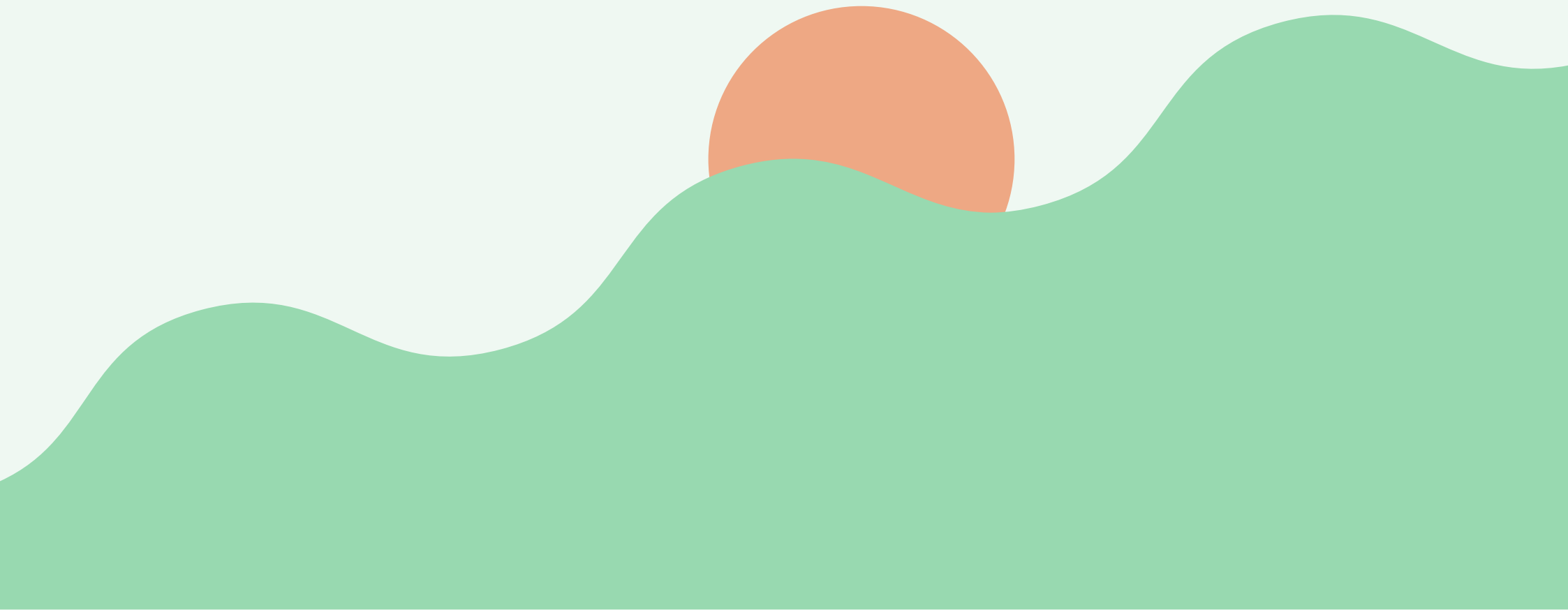
# Who are the characters and their roles?

- SOFIA** The founder
- MARTHA** Sales (also Sofia's best mate), works two or three days per week
- PETE** Marketing Freelancer but dedicated (knew from university)
- HANS** Product development
- LINDA** Everything else!



Chapter 1

# We've made it!



Work was hard, but everyone was kicking the ball in the same direction.



It's Monday morning and it's time for a debrief and the team meets around Sofia's desk.

*"Morning!"*

*"Morning!"* is chorused in return.

*"Well, I can't hold back, I just have to start with the news. Over the weekend, I met a new client, potentially a really good one. They said 'when you were developing your product it was like you already knew us'!"*

*It brings tears to my eyes now, to hear someone actually say it to you – it makes it real."*

Sofia pulled the founder's smile; that smile when a founder has been proven to be needed, they have been proven right.

The team clap and slap each other on the back, looking at each other with faces that show a touch of pride but more of relief.

Sofia continued.

*"The feedback from the final contract meeting was better than we thought. I think it's time to celebrate, we've reached the target of five fabulous new clients and now we should toast to that. Tonight... to the pub we go!"*

This is received as a great idea. Linda and Pete had a few family commitments, but it was OK to change things as this is what they had been working on for the past three months. The family would understand how important this was; after all – their families had been left somewhat bewildered over the past months with them being so absent and being left merely with the statement: *"it won't be for much longer"*.

Then one day...



Now, at last, Linda and Pete had a different story to tell their families, with five clients under their belt, the long hours and talking of Sofia's business as if it was their new adopted child was over, there was no way they were missing out on this one, especially with the exciting news of normality looming!

The night they had in the Cooldown Café was one to remember. The pressure had certainly been on for the past few months, there had been hard conversations and emotions leading the way but these five customers made the difference. They gave hope.

Pete and Linda looked at each other, both thinking: *"it's good to see Sofia happy again!"*

Martha looked over. *"I think that will give the break everyone needs,"* she said and laughed with a tone of thankfulness.

That was only a statement Sofia's best friend of 20 years could say, but it certainly reflected the ups and downs of the journey and what the others felt.



Now everything felt fun again, united and achieving... Sofia turned around and made one last toast in the air! *"Let's do this again and do it quicker."*

Everybody wants to be us, she thought, and everybody laughed, fuelled by the music, drink and pride.

The next day was quiet, everyone felt jaded, but still buoyed up, riding off the fun of last night's impromptu trip to the Cooldown Café.

In walked Sofia. *"Last night was so much fun... let's do it again soon!"* adding *"over to you Martha!"* in a casual manner that reflected their bond.

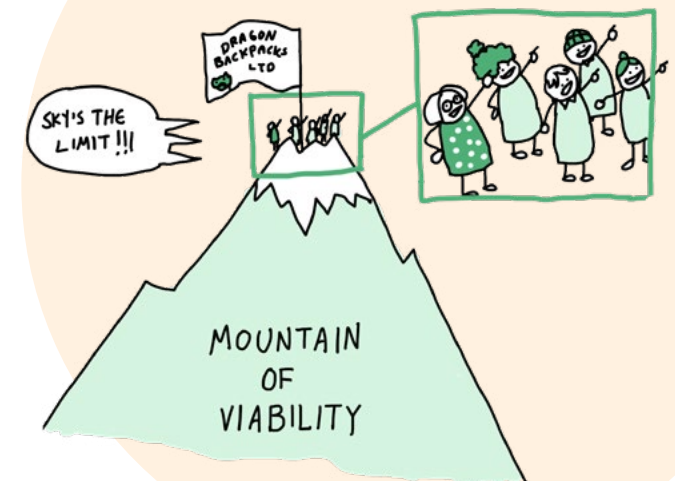
Wouldn't it be good if this were to be true? But was it down to her? Martha thought.

Now it's suddenly all about sales, where did that come from? To be honest, Martha had her own dreams and was doing this as an interim role and for the love of her friend. Yes she had belief, she loved the difference Sofia's dreams would bring, but they weren't her dreams and listening to someone else's aspirations on a daily basis, Martha began to feel she was losing her path and fusing into Sofia.

Well, I suppose I should be honoured that success is down to what I do, Martha thought to herself. She smiled over at Hans, who sarcastically said through a rolled-up paper funnel, *"go Martha!"*

But now Martha felt alone, no longer experiencing the united feel of last night where they had been stronger together, dancing into the early hours as if nothing could stop them, celebrating their success.

### The hustle phase is over!



## Note

Of course for any small business cash is the oxygen, the lifeline to survival and future growth. You can have a dream team, loyal and dedicated but if there are no sales it stays a dream!

This is what challenges us as early stage founders when driving viability, looking for the data that says you are needed and you do, in some form, solve my pain.

Ichak Adizes, a guru in corporate lifecycles, uses a simple example: Cash or profit is a scoreboard in a tennis match, you can't win by watching the scoreboard, it only tells you if you are winning or losing. The game is won by the journey, learning it and knowing how to hit the ball and satisfy clients' pains and needs from which the outcome is to win the sale.

Understanding and learning from the journey involves a broader approach from the founder.

Sofia celebrates sales, the winning of the match being played, who wouldn't? But on its own it encourages a fixed mindset approach to success, where only a successful sale brings a team together and the learnings of how the match was won are ignored. In this rapidly changing world the needs and wants of our customer are evolving faster than ever, staying close to the customer journey to the sale becomes a key part of the success.

## Your notes

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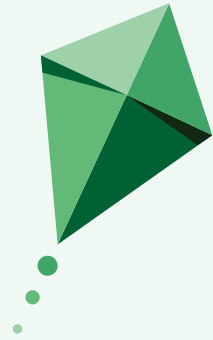
## Questions

1. Did Sofia make the right choice, taking her team for a celebratory night out?
2. What are the problems with the choices she has made?
3. How could she have used such significant early success more to her advantage?

## For you

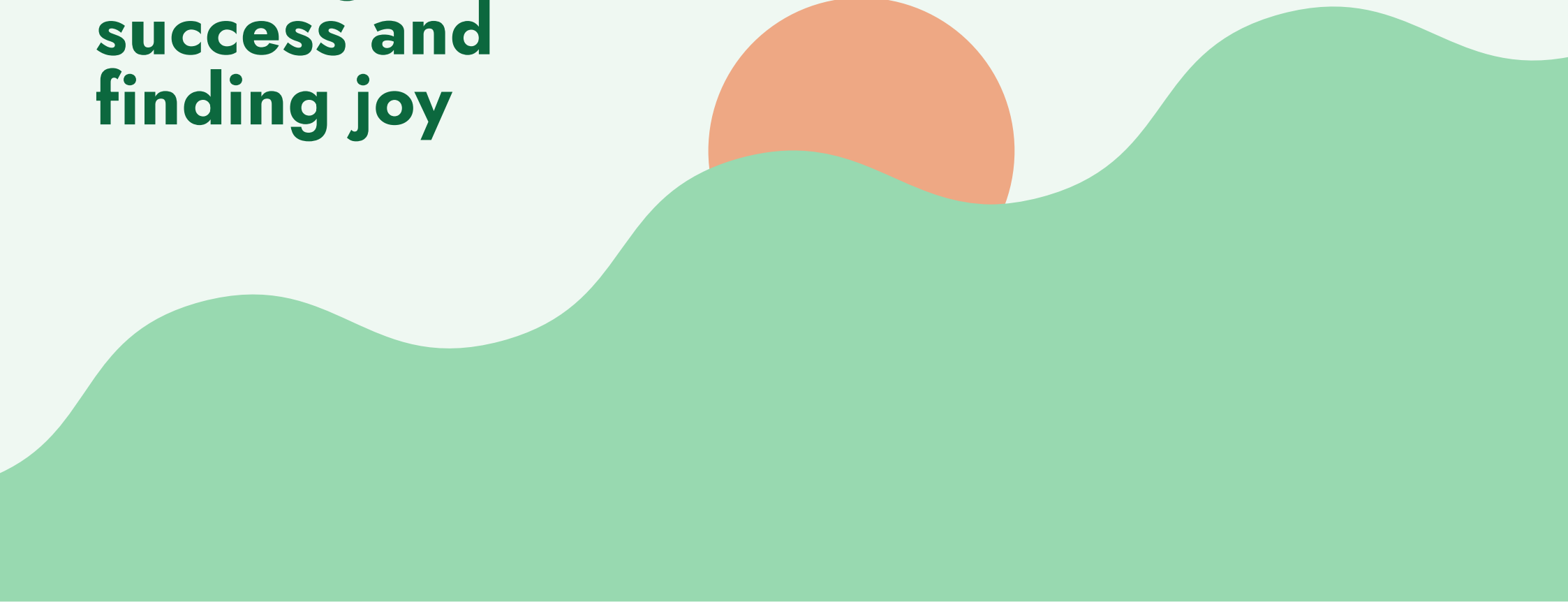
1. What would you have done? What do you celebrate?
2. How do you measure the difference you are making?
3. How do you create a unified approach to success?

**Let us now see what happens as the company continues to grow.**



Chapter 2

# Seeking more success and finding joy

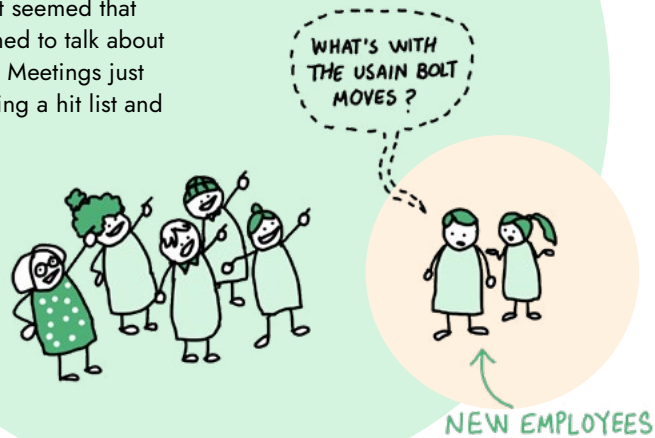




## The company grows. New employees join.

Over the next few months Martha drove the opportunities, leads were good and it was still exciting. It seemed that every time the team met, they always seemed to talk about the next time they could go and celebrate. Meetings just became about seeking new clients, following a hit list and how close the team was to signing them.

While the product had stayed the same, the team had increased in size and the company had moved into a bigger office, which had brought an increase in costs of around 50%. The pressure was on again, but this time it felt different, like do-or-die pressure.



Martha took a cup of tea and sat in reflection, flicking her pen between her fingers as she was spinning ideas. Was she the only one that felt that it wasn't as much fun as it used to be, the lost conversations together, the feeling that everybody's effort was making a difference? Now it seemed like it was just her. In fact, what was she still doing here? Where had the passion for her own dreams gone?

Her lifelong friend was happy, she had belief that things were moving forward, so Martha concluded that it was a personal frustration and perhaps they needed another trip to the Cooldown Café — maybe that would do the trick, a way to bring back a feeling of joy for her. She stared at the sales chart on the wall and reflected on the infamous night where the team celebrated those new clients that had made the difference. Maybe with a few more drinks, she could at least tolerate Tom!

## Things change.



The Monday morning debriefs had become boring, direct and sometimes quite bitey; it was more about who had the most to say about sales. In fact, everybody had become sales people with their personal function taking second place. Nothing else seemed important and other news or items would appear in 'any other business' right at the end of the meetings, if at all.

It was the same team but each leader had now some sort of assistant. Some were more annoying than others! Especially Pete's assistant marketeer and all Martha could hear was those two in her mind all day.

"The Pete and Tom gang" their self created brand name, and Tom knew nothing of the hard graft that had happened before he rode in on his white charger to save the day! (Visible of course only to Pete and Tom)



## Notes

Unity is pretty simple at the beginning, the purpose is clear and because data is limited and passion is high, celebrating getting the new clients that need you is a natural thing to do. It's the first sign of viability and the hope that soon you will have enough cash to invest in more people and create greater value for your customer. The company does grow a little and new recruits bring in new energy which is listened to but nothing really changes for the existing team.

Sofia, the founder, stays central to everything which stops a needed "early stage" organisational structure developing. With the founder holding on to the old "family style" of working there is confusion of roles, and in the decision-making and new ways of working that are needed to support a growing company. The ineffective working and growing demands of the business turns frustration into "remember the old days" from one side, and "how does this place work?" from new recruits. From here, with no unified organisational purpose, people

resort to pleasing their own. (Tom and Pete dominating is an example, Martha retreating into the wishes of her dreams is another.)

The simple model in the early stage survival phase is:

1. Purpose is clear
2. Team is clear
3. Business process is simple
4. Customer satisfaction: they wanted me and said it was as if your product read my mind

But as you move through the survival phase and add into the team as well as other additional fixed costs, what was simple becomes more complex with now an increased responsibility to perform.

Sofia and the team have trained themselves that winning the match is the sign of success without investing in the way of working, so we do more of what we are celebrating because this is what is associated with creating joy and greater security for all.

## Your notes

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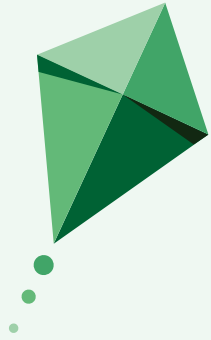
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## Questions

1. What is the real reason why Martha feels like she does?
2. How is Sofia the problem?

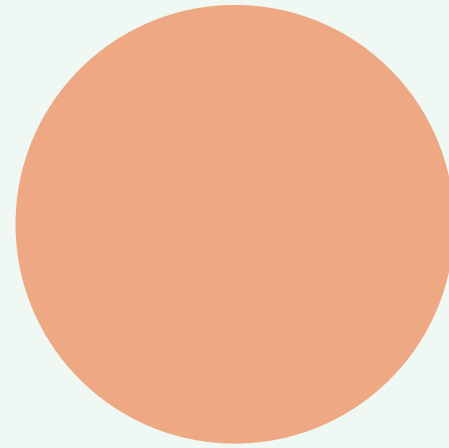
## For you

1. What feelings of Martha and Sofia would you be able to find in your company?
2. What is your total team unified on? How do they think and feel inspired?



Chapter 3

# Marketing have a plan



"Tom and I have been thinking and we have an idea," announced Pete.

Martha, Linda and Hans sank deeper into their chairs with the thought "what now?!"

"Great, fire away!" said Sofia.

"We have clusters of these companies here and here." Pete produced a pre-finished version of the new future and Tom, eager to have his voice heard, jumped in without any warning.

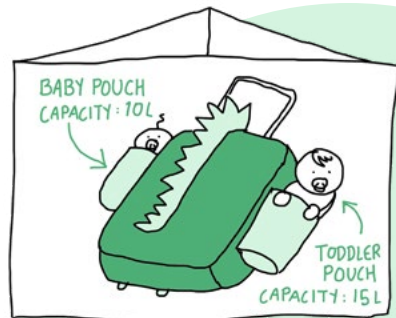
NEXT UP:  
TOM AND PETE  
HAVE A NEW IDEA  
TO PRESENT!



Hans screwed up his face in frustration as Pete implied that his created customer journey and manufacturing line could be moulded as easy as plasticine by a child.

He prepared to put his point very clearly forward but before he had a chance to respond, Sofia shouted "Great, let's give it a go."

Pete and Tom were ecstatic, Hans and Martha silent.



"Do you like it? What do you think?" he asked excitedly.

Pete began again. "These clusters could find a use with our product, they are not exactly the same as our current client but the pain and the needs are fairly similar, with small adjustments."



## Note

Pete now gets permission publically from the founder, Sofia, to move away from the core product based on pure emotion (hope) without discussions with sales/product. The decision-making process is purely function-led with the organisational purpose and values not considered. Sofia is yearning for the good old days (the basic ease of celebration and joy), so she says yes.



There is now confusion within the team and additional pressure on a new and evolving value creation process (how we create the value to the customer). How are the decisions being made? What is the change we are trying to make?

The outcome? A growing misalignment in the team, the way we work impacting a diluted purpose into the customer experience.



Although the example may seem flippant, it represents how easy it is to lose your way in the early growth phases of a company where the core of what you are known for has yet to be established both inside and outside the company. Early stage companies should be experimenting and trialling to create the right value for their customer, which may not be fully known yet, but this should be driven from the purpose and values of the company, keeping the power of alignment to who you are and not create the misalignment that will dilute it.

Dragon Backpacks will limit its growth, chugging with effort into an unstable future as it creates complications, misaligned teams and misunderstood lines of responsibilities. Sofia and her leadership team have begun to watch the “tennis scoreboard”, using wins to motivate the journey.

## Questions

1. How could Sofia have reacted differently to Tom and Pete's idea?
2. What kind of questions could she have asked them?

## For you

1. How are decisions made in your business?
2. Does your product create the difference you are trying to make?
3. Is it as strong as day 1? How has it evolved for you?
4. How do you measure how hard it's working for you?



**Your notes**

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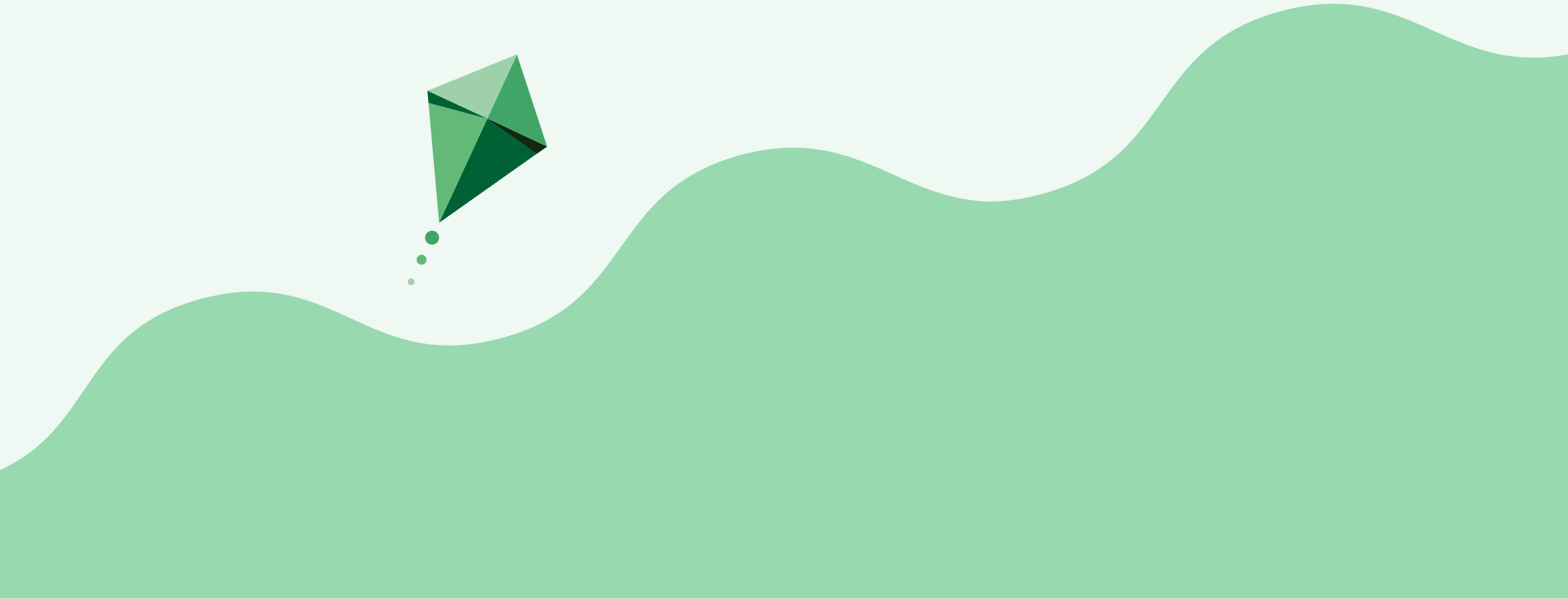
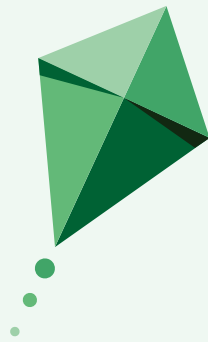
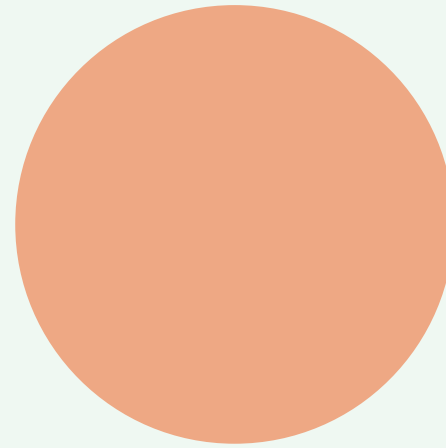
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Chapter 4

# The final picture



As the company grows, contradictory goals appear.



There is a high cost to bear. It begins with conflict between the old and the new, dividing relationships and encouraging the founding team of Martha and Hans to recreate the good old days rather than taking with them the success of the past and being a part of what should evolve with new input to drive a new future.

New team members are onboarded with the feeling that the success that is celebrated and heard by leaders are new customers and sales levels.

Without purpose or at least the guard rails of organisational values, the original clear and compelling difference the product set out to make for the customer remains dormant or distant from how people work or how decisions of the future are made. This knowledge and feeling is held within the people who were there at the start and who no longer speak or unite (or have since left).

Unity begins to exist more at a departmental level, stronger voices dominate and other roles are undermined, which means the way we create value to our customer becomes more of a game of chance than by a clear decision-making process. The founder remains at the centre of all decisions and emotionally, without reason sometimes, we begin to pivot or create value before the core product has been established both within or outside the company.

And when there is no movement on sales or no exciting new customers, there is no "success" and no celebration.

With the Cooldown Café being the only remnant of joy and good times, it's hard to lead the inspiration needed to drive into the more resilient establishing ground era and the relevancy to the customer begins to disconnect and what you are known for becomes unknown.

The company did well for a while. Then flatlined. The spark was gone.



**So what's happened?  
And can we write a different  
Chapter 5: The story of  
comeback.**

*"That which can be foreseen  
can be prevented."*

Charles H Mayo



## Your business is unique but the way businesses grow is not.



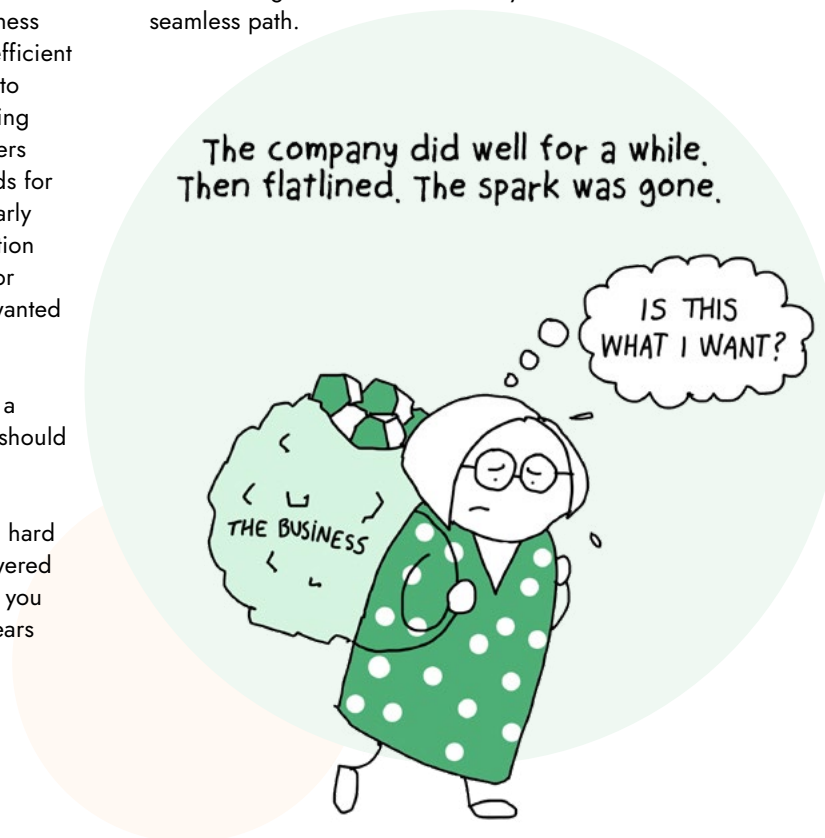
Businesses grow in a certain pattern, in known phases, each phase requiring different support.

The important thing about understanding the patterns is that we can use this knowledge to approach business growth in a way that reduces stress, conflict and inefficient ways of working. It's not about stopping or seeking to redirect the known growth patterns, it's about ensuring everybody's energy and focus is used where it matters most. This way we can build a company which stands for what you believe, making it more resilient to be clearly heard and understood. It is from this strong foundation that we can still have the agility to keep it relevant for today's ever changing customer without adding unwanted and purpose-diluting value.

You became an entrepreneur for fulfilment, joy and a sense of freedom to live how you want to live - that should always be the feeling.

There is no disillusion that being an entrepreneur is hard work but when those sometimes long hours are powered by the alignment to what you truly love and believe, you should feel energised, even the blood, sweat and tears will be seen as part of the exciting challenge.

A poke from the side or internal pressures or conflict will be seen as neither a negative distraction or long lasting pain as it's battered away by recognising its cause and manoeuvring the direction smoothly back to maintain the seamless path.



ONE THING IS CLEAR:  
SOFIA AND HER TEAM FORGOT THE COMPANY  
**PURPOSE**  
AND WHAT THEY STOOD FOR.



Everyday at Wyseminds I work with entrepreneurs who begin by telling me their version of this story, their own Sofia, which is why I wrote the founder's story and the Wyseway. We think we stand alone but when we know it's part of the journey and we have the solutions to take a more seamless path, then the entrepreneur world may again seem like the right choice.

There is an answer, and you will keep or find love again in what you do and do what you truly love, keeping your unique idea and making the impact you wish it to.

**To the beginning of the journey...**

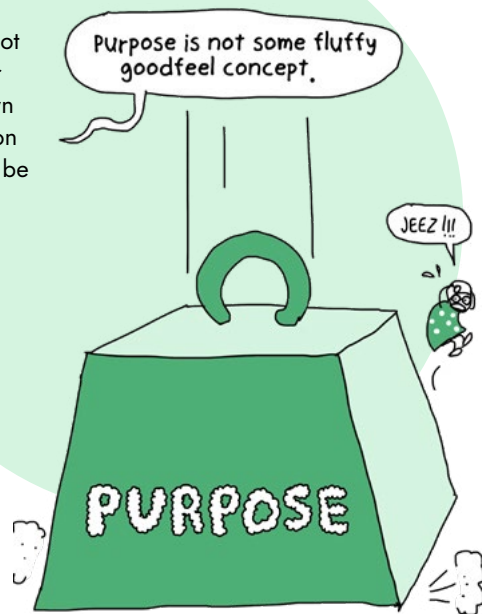
**Come back Sofia...  
Please don't go yet!**

## First thoughts: Where should Sofia (you) begin?

**Purpose matters...** There is a strong connection between business performance and purpose. We can predict the patterns of business growth and sometimes the emotions and frustrations are part of the growth phase. But how prepared you are to embrace and tackle what is not down to the known patterns begins with the strength of a company's purpose. Look back at chapter 2 and think what could have happened if Sofia had done things in a different way, thinking first with purpose and how it should affect the decisions she took.

In fact, [Analysis by BrightHouse and Boston Consulting Group](#) found that companies where the leaders, employees and customers all believed they had a strong purpose grew faster, performed better, and returned more value to their shareholders. However, that correlation only exists if a company's purpose is deeply embedded and not superficial.

In other words, it's not enough to have your purpose written down and gathering dust on a shelf - you have to be purpose-**LED** so that you live it.



## What does purpose look and feel like when you live it?

When running a company, your organisation's 'purpose' lies at the intersection of:

- ▶ Your personal vision as the founder
- ▶ How that helps solve a bigger problem in the world
- ▶ How it meets the needs of your customer and the authentic and distinctive strengths you bring to meet that need

But none of that matters unless it is deeply embedded in everything you do. That's why your purpose has to guide your daily actions and decisions.

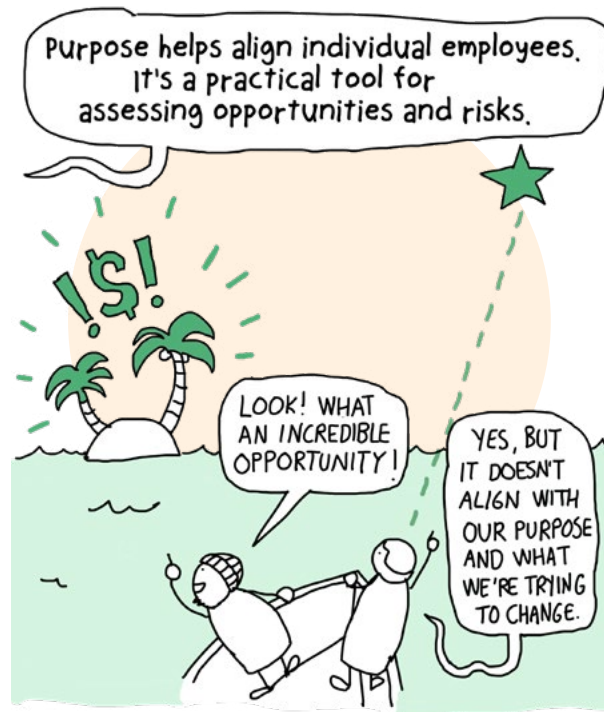
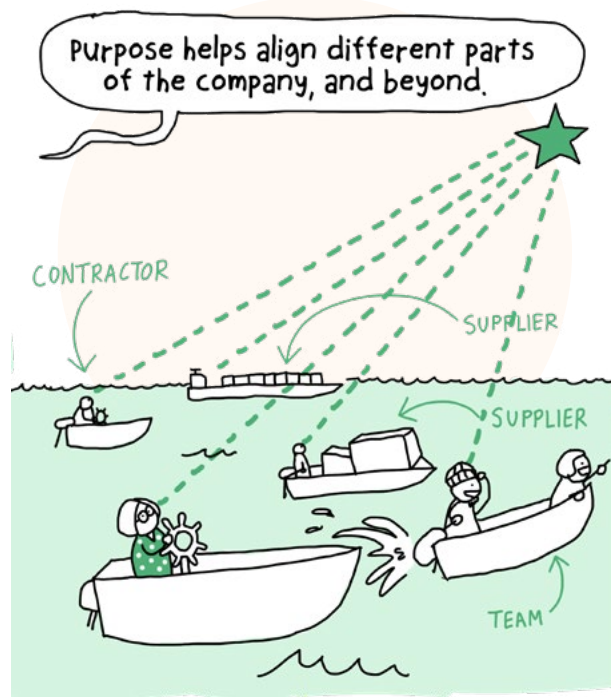
As the founder your personal purpose needs to be translated into an organisational purpose - something others can get behind. At Wyseminds we describe this organisational purpose as a Golden Thread; because it should run throughout your organisation and everything you do. It should be deeply felt by you and your team enough so that others can clearly feel it too. You have to believe in what you're doing, and do what you believe in.

## When purpose is embedded in your company:

It's clearly communicated and put to the forefront by leaders. Whatever your role is in the company, team, alliances, suppliers, investors and even your customer, you know its direction and the course the company will steer to make the difference that only this company can.



It's what inspires employees, partnerships and alliances to bring their best and connect what they believe towards a unified goal.



It enables people to feel clear on how to make the right decisions, and a sense of responsibility that they can make within their role. These decisions are easily understood by everyone as they are determined by what the company believes and therefore, connection to the customer grows stronger.

It unites a team regardless of position, function or character of the individual. It inspires everybody to belong to the change your company is making.

It celebrates the journey of getting the sales you need so you create a learning mindset approach to growth, ensuring that everyday you are always staying relevant to your customer and your community, clear in who you are and flexible to changing needs.



# The story of a comeback.

## What should Sofia do? Let's rewrite chapter 5.



Sofia began by going back to the start for her, there was a reason why she had started Dragon Backpacks. All of her life she saw the value in everything and everybody, she would always make a stand when people weren't listened to and, even worse, when things were wasted.

So what was the gift she brought the world, in everything she did?

### Personal purpose

Everybody and everything carries equal value.

### Personal values

1. There is always a better way than the way we live today (**Optimism**)
2. Nothing stops living its purpose (**Value/worth**)
3. There is a responsibility within us all to make a difference today (**Self responsibility**)
4. Find joy in finding answers (**Respect for oneself**)

She was feeling good, the reminder of the value of herself played a big part in repairing the past 12 months of frustration.

These were her values. Now she had to channel them into her company in a way that would bring Dragon Backpacks to life and ensure that everybody could understand the value in what she was setting out to do, and the way in which she wished to do it.

### Organisational purpose

Protect what you value whilst protecting the value of our world.

*From Sofia's personal purpose: Everybody and everything carries equal value.*

### Organisational values

1. Promote the picture we wish to see  
*From Sofia's personal values: There is always a better way than the way we live today (**Optimism**)*
2. Never create more without reason  
*From Sofia's personal values: Nothing stops living its purpose (**Value/worth**)*
3. Remind ourselves daily about the importance of tomorrow  
*From Sofia's personal values: There is a responsibility within us all to make a difference today (**Self responsibility**)*
4. It's not someone else's problem to solve  
*From Sofia's personal values: Find joy in finding answers (**Respect for oneself**)*

Sofia revisited the understanding in her team, bringing them together to see the long-term purpose of Dragon Backpacks for the customer and how her story had brought her to this moment. What was the true difference she wished to make in the world and most importantly, what was the measure of achieving that difference?

From here, the team leaders were able to develop the behavioural competencies of the way they would work to ensure the values were embedded in the daily actions of everybody involved in the company to make that difference. Moving towards appreciating the value of individual and team contribution, naturally led towards celebrating the journey to successful sales rather than celebrating the sales level itself, which was creating a short-term joy but a long-term negative effect on the team.

Now with the support of her newly unified team, Sofia re-positioned herself. Rather than her controlling all processes she established growth project based teams to work on ideas. These teams included a mix of functions as well as both new and the more established team members.

Her focus was on future growth and establishing new opportunities for the basic product and then using the project groups to work with her. The weekly meetings turned project based and were not function-led!

As a result:

- ▶ Over the course of 3 months she unified the total team on their purpose, and everyone knew their contribution toward fulfilling it. This included suppliers, alliances and channels of distribution. It meant saying goodbye to some that no longer fitted in with the newly defined values or new ways of working.
- ▶ Of all the things they measured, they focused their attention on measuring and celebrating the things that were about their purpose.
- ▶ That meant that they were much more aligned with their customer, and they developed shared business processes that were more streamlined.

Once the team were unified and realigned on purpose it meant the way the company was supported was naturally more effective.

- ▶ Updating the organisational structure became much easier when growth started happening naturally and organically. The project based teams enabled new employees to learn from the existing team and in turn allowed the original founding team to be open and feel the benefit of the new resource and ideas.
- ▶ With growth project based teams working with clear purpose targets, involvement and self-responsibility was broadly distributed, bringing a wider reach of involvement and inclusion. It was agreed by the board meeting that Dragon Backpacks was over-engineered, costing time and energy and was off purpose so they simplified it and focused on their core offering. Naturally the cattle feeder was given a place in the “not for now, if ever” file and globe trotting Mum’s added value became holders for a hot and cold water drinks carrier (Yes, Pete and Tom had a sign off from the team for that!)

# In fact, this short version of Sofia's journey through start-up is my story.

Work was hard, but everyone was kicking the ball in the same direction.



I was feeling the world on my shoulders in the middle of the great recession of 2007/8, opening a brand that was expected to fly but chugged instead. Once I realised that the increasing burden I felt was actually me fighting the known patterns of growth, and once I understood this and how a different, more purpose-led approach would change our direction opening up the space to support the growth in the right way... Well, the rest was history as they say, and good history.

Of course I didn't make Dragon Backpacks and the characters of Tom, Hans and Peter did not exist in this exact form, but the essence of the story is real.

There is one more important thing: what happened to Martha, was she real?

Martha represents the loyalty that sits within any founding team, the friendship, the acting confidant, the family you miss. She is the unquestionable loyalty that gets you through these initial growth phases and I place her in as a reminder that when you are busy living your dreams, you will always be surrounded by people who have their own and are sometimes putting theirs on hold to help you with yours. Let's never forget Martha! They are priceless and should be treated so.

If you would like to discover the power of your purpose in your business, and how to embed your purpose to drive greater performance in the difference you are trying to make, then get in touch.

Let's all feel like Sofia again, or like I do today!

**Julie Perkins**



[www.wyseminds.com](http://www.wyseminds.com)

To go directly to our online support programme, visit [yourjourney.wyseminds.com/](http://yourjourney.wyseminds.com/)



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