The Talks Behind the Build.

Every framework in the Breath Awakens Business Series has a talk behind it.

Watch them. In this order. Before you build.

Eight Talks. One Arc.

Each talk addresses a specific failure point in building a new venture.

How to use this presentation. *These eight talks are drawn from the Breath Awakens curriculum and applied here directly to the challenge of building a new business. Each talk is paired with the specific business decision or failure mode it addresses. Watch each talk before the week it corresponds to. The sequence matters.*

Talk	When	What it addresses
1 · **Carol Dweck** — The Power of Believing That You Can Improve	Before you begin	The growth mindset: the ground every week that follows stands on.
2 · **Simon Sinek** — How Great Leaders Inspire Action	Before Week One	Why your WHY must precede every other decision.
3 · **Robin Dunbar** — Can the Internet Buy You More Friends?	Before Week One	The science behind the Dunbar 150 and why sphere of influence is your primary growth engine.
4 · **Robert Waldinger** — What Makes a Good Life?	Before Week One	Good relationships make a good life: the ground of the Goal Sharing Exercise.
5 · **Ernesto Sirolli** — Want to Help Someone? Shut Up and Listen!	Before Week Two	The single most important talk for anyone building an offering for others.
6 · **Angela Duckworth** — Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance	Before Week Three	What keeps a builder going through the prototype failures that precede a working product.
7 · **Amy Cuddy** — Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are	Before Week Four	How you occupy space before you speak shapes how you are received.
8 · **Chris Voss** — Never Split the Difference	Before Week Four	Tactical empathy as the primary tool in every pricing and client conversation.

The Power of Not Yet.

The Power of Believing That You Can Improve · TEDxNorrköping · about 10 minutes ·
www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve

THE CORE IDEA

Dweck's research contrasts a fixed mindset, the belief that ability is set, with a growth mindset, the belief that it can be developed. Her emblem is a school that gave the grade "Not Yet" instead of a fail: the words turn a failure into a stage of learning, and the belief itself changes how people meet difficulty.

Applied to the Whole Journey — The Ground

From Thought to Form is itself a spiral of not yet. You do not arrive knowing your why, your people or your form; you grow into each. Hold the whole journey in the growth mindset and nothing that goes wrong can stop you. It only teaches.

Applied to Week One — Naming Your Why

You will not name your why perfectly the first time. Write it anyway, and treat the first version as not yet. Each week will sharpen it. A why that is allowed to grow becomes truer than one you are afraid to revise.

Applied to Week Three — The Prototype

When the prototype stumbles in front of real people, the two words "not yet" keep the work alive. A fixed mindset hears a verdict. A growth mindset hears information, and returns to the work with better questions.

The Venture-Specific Practice

Before Week One, write down one thing you believe you cannot do in this venture. Add the word "yet" to the end of the sentence. Read it again at the close of Week Four and notice what has changed.

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Start With WHY.

How Great Leaders Inspire Action · TEDxPuget Sound · 18 minutes · www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action

THE CORE IDEA

People don't buy what you do — they buy why you do it. Sinek's Golden Circle places WHY at the center, HOW in the middle, and WHAT on the outside. Most businesses communicate from the outside in. The ones that build loyal followings communicate from the inside out. The WHY precedes the product.

Applied to Week One — Your WHY

The first section of the business plan template asks you to name your WHY before naming anything else. This is not a values exercise. It is a strategic one. The businesses that communicate WHY clearly attract participants who believe what they believe — not just customers who want what they offer.

Applied to Week Two — Your Offering

Every offering you build must be traceable back to your WHY. If you cannot draw a direct line from your WHY to the specific offering you are describing in Week Two, the offering is built from the outside in. It will produce revenue but not coherence.

Applied to Week Four — Communication

The most common failure in external communication is leading with WHAT before establishing WHY. Every LinkedIn post, every pitch, every client conversation that begins with 'here is what I offer' before establishing why it exists is working against the listener's natural decision-making process.

The Venture-Specific Question

Before watching this talk: write one sentence about why your venture exists. After watching it: write the same sentence again. If the second version is more specific and more honest than the first, the talk has done its work.

The Science of Your Sphere.

Can the Internet Buy You More Friends? · TEDxObserver · about 15 minutes · www.youtube.com/watch?v=07IpED729k8

THE CORE IDEA

Dunbar's research established that the human brain can maintain stable social relationships with approximately 150 people — structured in layers of 5, 15, 50, and 150. The internet has not changed this. It has only made the outer rings more visible while the inner rings remain the only ones that produce real trust.

Applied to Week One — Sphere Mapping

The Dunbar 150 mapping exercise in the business plan template is not a networking strategy. It is a biological reality applied operationally. Your first 100 clients will come from your existing 150 — not from social media reach. The platform amplifies the sphere. It does not replace it.

Applied to Week Two — First Ten Clients

The 'name your first ten clients' field in the offering template is a Dunbar exercise. Your first ten paying clients are almost certainly in your existing 50. Name them before you build the offering. If you cannot name ten people who might purchase it, the offering may not be as developed as it feels.

Applied to Week Four — Communication Prioritisation

When communication resources are limited — which they always are — invest in the inner rings first. One personal contact with someone in your Dunbar 15 produces more business development than 10 posts reaching strangers. The Week Four communication calendar reflects this hierarchy explicitly.

The Venture-Specific Practice

Before you spend a single hour on social media content, spend four hours mapping your Dunbar 150. Every name. Every layer. The mapping itself is the most valuable marketing activity available to a new venture — and it costs nothing but time and honesty.

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What Makes a Good Life.

What Makes a Good Life? Lessons from the Longest Study on Happiness · TEDxBeaconStreet · about 13 minutes ·
www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness

THE CORE IDEA

The Harvard Study of Adult Development has followed the same group of men, and later their families, since 1938. Its clearest lesson, Waldinger says, is that good relationships keep us happier and healthier, more than money or fame; and that loneliness does real harm.

Applied to Week One — The Goal Sharing Exercise

This talk is the ground the Goal Sharing Exercise grew from: a good life, turned into goals you can live toward. Its three categories reach for what the study found matters most, good relationships and real contribution.

Applied to Week One — Your Sphere

The people in your Board of five and your Dunbar 150 are not only a market. They are the life the venture is meant to serve. A plan that grows the business while thinning those relationships has misread its own why.

Applied to Week Three — Building Without Burning Out

Carrying a prototype through takes long hours. Keep time for the people who matter. The study suggests that the quality of those relationships will shape your life more than the success of any single launch.

The Venture-Specific Question

After watching, ask: if this venture succeeds exactly as planned, who will be in my life in ten years? Then write your goals so that they include those people, as a life you actually want to live.

Want to Help Someone? Shut Up and Listen.

Want to Help Someone? Shut Up and Listen! · TEDxEQChCh · 17 minutes · www.ted.com/talks/ernesto_sirolli_want_to_help_someone_shut_up_and_listen

THE CORE IDEA

Sirolli spent years helping communities develop businesses by providing resources, expertise, and plans. Every project failed. The reason: he arrived with solutions before understanding the problem from the person experiencing it. The moment he stopped presenting and started listening — genuinely, without agenda — the work began to succeed. Passion, expertise, and market must all be present for a business to work. Finding that requires listening, not presenting.

Applied to Week Two — Building the Offering

Before you design what you will offer, you must be able to describe the problem from the participant's perspective — in their language, not yours. If you have not sat with someone who has this problem and listened without offering a solution, you are building from assumption.

Applied to Week Two — For Whom

The 'who is not a good fit' field in the offering template exists because of Sirolli. Knowing who you are not for is as important as knowing who you are for. The clearer you are about the boundary, the more credible your yes becomes.

Applied to Week Four — Client Conversations

The most common error in a sales conversation is presenting the offering before the prospective client has finished describing their situation. The Sirolli principle: ask one question. Then be silent. Ask one more. Only when you can accurately summarise what they have told you — in their words — do you present anything.

The Venture-Specific Question

Name the last time you sat with someone who has the problem your venture addresses and listened without offering a solution. If you cannot name a specific conversation, that is the first thing to do before Week Two.

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance.

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance · TED Talks Education · 6 minutes ·
www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance

THE CORE IDEA

Duckworth's research across military academies, spelling bees, and sales organizations identified one characteristic that predicted success across all domains: grit. Not talent. Not intelligence. Not resources. The combination of passion for a specific long-term goal and the perseverance to pursue it through failure. The highest predictor of success is the willingness to return to the work after it fails.

Applied to Week Three — Prototyping

Every prototype fails in some specific way. The builder who treats prototype failure as information rather than defeat — who returns to the work with curiosity rather than discouragement — is the one who eventually produces something that works. Grit is the operational condition that makes prototyping possible.

Applied to Week Four — The 90-Day Plan

The 90-day plan in the business template is built on the assumption that Month 2 will be harder than Month 1 and Month 3 harder than Month 2. This is the nature of building anything real. Duckworth's research confirms that the builders who complete all three months are not the most talented — they are the most gritty.

Applied to Week Four — Communication Consistency

Consistent communication — one post per day, one personal contact per day, every week, for 90 days — is a grit practice. The results do not come in the first 30 days. The builder who stops at Day 28 because 'it is not working' has not yet experienced what Day 90 produces.

The Venture-Specific Question

Name the last time you returned to something after it failed. Not metaphorically — specifically. What did you build or attempt that did not work, and what did you do next? That pattern is your current relationship with grit. The prototype will reveal whether it has developed or not.

Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are.

Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are · TEDGlobal 2012 · 21 minutes ·
www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_may_shape_who_you_are

THE CORE IDEA

Cuddy argues that physical posture affects not only how others perceive you but how you perceive yourself. Later research supports the first part, that open, expansive postures can help people feel more confident, though the hormone changes reported in the original study did not hold up. Presence is not a performance. It is a physical state that can be prepared.

Applied to Week Four — Before Every Significant Communication

Before a pricing conversation, a pitch, a difficult internal meeting, or a piece of content you feel uncertain about — check your physical state. Are you contracted or expanded? Two minutes of deliberate physical expansion before high-stakes communication changes what you say and how it lands.

Applied to Week Two — Pitching Your Offering

The enrollment conversation — where you describe your offering and state your price — is the moment most builders contract. They soften the price, qualify the offering, and apologise for asking. Cuddy's practice addresses this directly. Prepare your body before you have that conversation.

Applied to Week Three — Prototyping

Delivering a prototype to real participants for the first time is a high-stakes moment. The facilitator's contracted physical state transfers to the room. Participants feel uncertainty in the facilitator's body before they hear it in the facilitator's words.

The Venture-Specific Practice

Before every session in this series, every client conversation, and every piece of content you produce: two minutes. Stand. Expand. Breathe. The 4-4-4-4 Breath Anchor plus deliberate physical expansion. This is not motivational preparation — it is operational preparation.

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Tactical Empathy.

Never Split the Difference · TEDxUniversityofNevada · 12 minutes · www.ted.com/talks/chris_voss_never_split_the_difference

THE CORE IDEA

Voss served as the FBI's lead international kidnapping negotiator. His core principle: the most effective negotiation tool is not logic or persuasion — it is tactical empathy. Before presenting any position, accurately name what the other person is experiencing. Not what you want them to feel. What they actually feel. This disarms defensiveness and creates the conditions for genuine agreement.

Applied to Week Four — Pricing Conversations

When a prospective client hesitates at your price, the instinctive response is to justify, discount, or explain. The Voss approach: label what they are experiencing first. 'It sounds like this is a significant investment to consider.' Pause. Their response will tell you what is actually in the way — and it is rarely the price.

Applied to Week Two — The Offering Description

The most persuasive offering description begins by accurately naming the prospective participant's current situation — before describing the offering. 'If you have tried other programmes and found them to be either too conceptual or not deep enough, this may be relevant.' That sentence does more than any feature list.

Applied to Week Three — Prototype Feedback

When collecting feedback after a prototype session, the Voss principle applies directly. Do not ask 'what did you think?' — that produces polite rather than useful responses. Ask calibrated questions: 'What was most confusing?' 'What would have made this more useful?' These questions produce specific, actionable data.

The Venture-Specific Practice

In your next significant business conversation — whether a pricing discussion, a partnership conversation, or a client onboarding — do not present your position until you have accurately summarised theirs. Use the phrase 'It sounds like…' before your first substantive statement. Note what changes.

Watch in This Order.

Each talk prepares the specific thinking the corresponding week requires.

THE SEQUENCE IS INTENTIONAL

Dweck first, because the growth mindset is the ground the others stand on. Sinek, Dunbar and Waldinger before Week One, to establish WHY, sphere and a good life as the foundation before anything else is named. Sirolli before Week Two: it is the most important talk in the series and is worth watching twice. Duckworth before Week Three. Cuddy and Voss before Week Four.

When	Talk	Note
Before You Begin	Carol Dweck — The Power of Believing That You Can Improve	*Hold every setback in the weeks ahead as a stage, not a verdict.*
Before Week One	Simon Sinek — How Great Leaders Inspire Action · Robin Dunbar — Can the Internet Buy You More Friends? · Robert Waldinger — What Makes a Good Life?	
Before Week Two	Ernesto Sirolli — Want to Help Someone? Shut Up and Listen!	*Watch it twice. The offering cannot be designed without it.*
Before Week Three	Angela Duckworth — Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance	*Note what you feel when she describes the pattern of return after failure. That feeling is the data.*
Before Week Four	Amy Cuddy — Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are · Chris Voss — Never Split the Difference	*Watch Cuddy first. Physical preparation before communication strategy.*