

# Just don't miss the train

## Are you an optimist, a pessimist, or a pragmatist?

### OPTIMIST'S VIEWPOINT

There are plenty of fish in the sea.  
Something is bound to turn up.

Nobody's perfect.

We have all the time in the World.

### V PESSIMIST'S VIEWPOINT

A good (wo)man is hard to find.

You have to sit for a long time with  
your mouth open before a roast duck  
flies into it.

You must kiss a lot of frogs.

Time waits for no (wo)man.

The train is about to leave the station. A pragmatist advising would urge you not to miss it.



## **Sitrep - UK SME Q224**

Balance sheets are flashing red; businesses are going bust or dragging-on like Zombies; markets are either overheated or stagnant; prices still rising; resources are scarce; people are flakier than ever; optimism is rare; productivity is low; investment is scant; whoever wins the General Election, the UK economy won't improve for a while. Mr Micawber is long dead, so waiting for something to turn up isn't enough. And, by the way, hope is not a strategy.

So, it's up to you to make it happen for yourself.

But what is the first step? I suggest we talk about truth.

### **Let's talk about truth**

I have spent roughly a third of my 40-year career in corporations, a third in the public service and a third in SMEs. I have recently had shameful revelations about truth and lies, and I'm neither proud nor judgemental, after-all, I have been complicit. My observations are that:

- **Corporations lie to their shareholders.**
- **Politicians lie to the voters.**
- **SME owners lie to themselves.**

I can't comment here about the first two, but I can make a few suggestions to help SME owners.

### **Suggestions for SME Owners**

- Whatever else you may or may not have, you have urgency, timing, and agency in decision-making.
- Focus on business basics:
  - Concentrate on profitable customers
  - Grip operations
  - Get real about how your business is facing AI
  - Build cash: manage receivables and payables; cut non-essential spend; don't fund losses.

- Think about your next ValueStep, how and when you might get there:
  - Start with your three horizons (H1 - 80%, H2 - 15%, H3 - 5%).
  - Consider whether you may ever want to buy a company or sell your own? Either way, be realistic about your company valuation.
  - Make a plan. Even if it's not the best-ever plan, decide whether to implement it, after-all, it's not certain that another, better plan will be along tomorrow.
  - Indecision is still a decision, so act now.

**Whatever train you choose, just make sure you don't miss it.**

**ValueStep helps businesses catch the train to their right future.**

ValueStep is an independent advisory team, led by founders and leaders who have, for many years, themselves faced these challenges and realised true enterprise value. We have deep experience as practitioners, feel the things that many miss, are brave enough to articulate what some are hesitant to say, and equipped to do what is necessary.

Is this resonating with you? If so, then contact ValueStep to open a confidential, complementary, without-obligation, conversation.



**Robert Osborne**

**Contact us: -**

Robert Osborne – Chair  
Telephone: +44 (0) 7780 663637  
[r.c.osborne@valuestep.co.uk](mailto:r.c.osborne@valuestep.co.uk)

Website: [www.valuestep.co.uk](http://www.valuestep.co.uk)  
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/33316700>

