

The many roles of a business owner

Are you finding it difficult to fit in everything you need to do in a day? – Do you feel you are being pulled in many different directions at once? Needing to perform tasks that you simply do not enjoy and/or for which you really do not have the skill-set?

Welcome to the world of the small business owner! Often when we launch a new business it is because we have skills in a particular area or enjoy work in a certain field! All this is terrific until we start to realize there are many other things that a business owner is responsible for and which cannot be ignored!

Over time, we can find we less and less time doing what we enjoy and/or is important - with days and hours flying by as we desperately try to cope with the avalanche items screaming for our attention!

So what can you do to avoid this sense of overwhelm and get back to focusing on what you enjoy?

Step 1 – Recognise the reality of the roles a small business owner needs to perform.

As a small business owner there are a number of very different roles that you are called on to perform – many of which require different skill-sets and approaches - for example a small business owner is also the:

Role	✓	Role	✓	Role	✓
Sales Manager-Person		Human Resources Manager		Recruitment Officer	
Payroll Officer		Clerk		Complaints Manager	
Warehouse Manager		Logistics Manager		I.T. Manager	
O H & S Manager		Supervisor		Admin Manager	
Technician		Craftsperson		Productivity Manager	
Web Master		Copywriter		Marketing Manager	
Financial Controller		Debt Collector		Customer Relations Mgr.	
Tax Collector		Purchasing Officer		Quality Control Mgr.	
Creative Director		Delivery Person		Training Manager	

Whilst all these functions will not be necessary in every business – the key is to recognise that as a small business owner there is a wide variety of functions you may be called upon to perform from time to time.

Often when business owners view this list for the first time they start to recognise why they are so frantically busy each day and why it is so hard to find the time to focus on what is important.

At least knowing this information - you can then decide what you are going to do about it!

Step 2 – Acknowledge your strengths, preferences and development needs

The next step is to recognise your strengths and preferences – and crucially, where you can be most effective in your business.

At this point, it is also important to reflect on where you are spending most of your time in the business – human nature is such that we tend to spend our time doing what we enjoy (or work for which we are skilled – to the detriment of what is actually needed to grow the business.

We also need to ensure a balance of activities is being achieved. For example if we focus too much on marketing to the detriment of say the operational side of our business – the wheels can start to fall off. Similarly, if we pay insufficient attention to the financial side of the business, issuing invoices early and the following up - our dream business can quickly become a nightmare!

How to address areas not receiving attention

Rather than filling up your calendar with task-orientated activities, to ensure each role is receiving the appropriate level of attention, we suggest allocating specific blocks of time to attend to particular role functions.

For example you may set aside Tuesday and Thursday morning to focus on marketing your business – contacting potential customers, following up opportunities, creating material for your website etc.

For each “time block” allocation you then maintain a separate prioritised list of activities.

This process is simple, very practical and works!

Give priority to your High Result Activities

When allocating time in your calendar there are three critical elements not to overlook:

- Ensure priority is given to your Key Result Activities – these are the activities that are absolutely critical to the growth and success of your business. In most businesses there will only be two or three Key Result Activities
- Keep blocks of time free for unplanned activities or “Murphy’s Law” – (the key client who needs to see you urgently being an example)
- Set aside at least one hour per week to “work on your business” – to think about how your business can be changed or improved to provide a better customer experience.

Batch work of a similar type

A proven way of becoming more productive is to “batch” work of a similar type and then allocate time in your calendar to ensure it is completed. For example you may set aside a few hours each week on a particular day to do “admin” type work – the stuff most of us do not like doing - but which needs to be done!

Again when doing this however you need to prioritise all the tasks to ensure those that are most important to the effective functioning of your business are completed.

Stop Doing!

For most business owners it will be impossible to complete every task that is screaming for attention. Therefore a decision needs to be taken around tasks or activities you will simply no longer perform – you will stop doing!

The reality is, the implications of taking this step for *many* activities are minimal – the wheels do not fall off and the sun still comes up the next day!

Taking a decision to “stop doing” can free up a remarkable amount of time prevents your “to do” list being cluttered with items that you will never complete and simply add to the feeling of overwhelm and guilt!

Consider out-sourcing where possible.

One of the greatest mistakes we see small business owners make is trying to perform tasks they are simply not equipped to handle – the end result being the task is not done well and/or it takes far longer than it should!

To improve the situation, a small business owner can undertake training so they can perform the task more efficiently – however if the task detracts from time available for Key Result Activities – then to go down this path is actually to the detriment of the business!

It is actually costing the business money in terms of lost opportunity!

A common example we regularly see, is business owners doing their own books – in many instances records are only updated periodically and the data entered is incorrect – the end result being the business owner has no real idea where they stand from a financial perspective – leading to stress and sleepless nights. It makes far more sense to use the services of a qualified bookkeeper to perform this work (unless you are trained in accounting) and then use the time freed up to focus on growing your business!

Summary

The starting point for improving your business productivity is to understand all the roles that need to be performed within the business. The next step is to then decide which of those roles you have the skillset to perform, where either training is required or which need to be outsourced.

Having done this, then allocate blocks of time in your calendar to the functions you will perform – always giving priority to your High Result Activities.

If you would like to learn more about how you can more effectively manage your business consider enrolling in our Managing for Success Workshop – the cost of which includes a FREE mentoring session

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