



The Secret Roadblocks Standing in the Way of the Life (and Business) You Want and What to Do About It

Over my nearly 25 years as an entrepreneur and 15 years of providing business development process improvement consulting services to restorers across the country I am more convinced than ever that the technical or tangible aspects of growing a business, while extremely important, pale in importance when compared to the psychological, emotional and intellectual conditions on the part of the owner that must be achieved in order to implement the meaningful business changes that drive growth.



As business owners we must resist society's "Myth of Entrepreneurship" lest we judge ourselves too harshly or unrealistically or expect to become overnight millionaires.

The reality is that there are known processes for increasing the percentages or likelihood of achieving business success but these are by no means absolute. Simply considering that 96% of businesses fail within ten years it is clear that if there are rules of the road, very few people know or understand them or that there is a lot of variability that resists duplicable certainty.

But what if it goes deeper than simply the technical or tangible aspects of growing a business? What if the deeper problem at the root of all these business failures, all these dashed hopes and dreams is actually in the heart and head of the entrepreneur?

And this is not a simple "this or that" question. The reality is that going into business for oneself is a massive life event that pulls on a whole host of emotional and psychological triggers that the owner may or may not even be aware of.

Now add to that trying to understand how a business really works in reality when you are in the trenches yourself with the bullets flying and everything is at risk and you get a potent stew of the "human being" with all his or her quirks, knowledge, psychological make-up, childhood experiences, education, knowledge, street smarts (or lack thereof), emotional make-up, training (or lack thereof), knowledge of business and management (or lack thereof) and it becomes clearer why so many businesses fail.

Given all of the unknowns, one of the biggest problems is that entrepreneurs often "don't know what they don't know" and only learn the hard way—through direct experience. This is not in itself a bad thing but it certainly can be a costly thing! I have thought many times that I could have easily paid for a Harvard PhD with the money that learning my lessons the hard way has cost me.

But, my suspicion is that the reason that so many businesses fail within ten years is because the owner was focused on working "in" the business delivering the company's product or service. And while they were preoccupied in the day-to-day, the things that they didn't know they didn't know rose up like a tidal wave and simply washed away their businesses.

As a consultant, I develop all kinds of proprietary intellectual property in the form of programs, processes and products that are designed to help restorers increase top line revenue and bottom line profit so that their company can become a true wealth-generating machine.

We have spent enormous amounts of time and energy installing these programs, training and working with our clients' business development reps, production people, admin staff and owners. And those owners have paid significant sums of money for our services.

And here is what is so interesting. The single most important variable in the degree of success that we have with our clients is the degree of owner engagement.

As a consultant it has never made sense to me why some owners didn't engage or didn't engage sufficiently. After all, these are the same owners that saw that their business had challenges they wanted to address, did their due diligence on our offerings and then entered into the engagement of their own free will. So why would those same owners not show up for meetings, not reinforce and support the programs with their staff or even worse, actively undermine the engagement (sometimes knowingly)?

And this has led me to understand that it's not just consulting that many business owners need. It is consulting and coaching to address the issues that hold owners back from fully committing and fully engaging in the program they purchased to help grow their business. And this would apply to any business development program or organizational change that they would embark upon or even being fully committed to the success of their business at all!

So while consulting can focus on the necessary tangible aspects of business development in the forms of programs, processes, change initiatives and so on, coaching must focus on the business leader helping them to get clear about five major aspects of their business from their perspective as the business owner. After all, the business must work to satisfy the needs and desires of the business owner first.

These five areas are:

1. Clarifying Your Direction
2. Strategizing Your Actions
3. Upgrading Your Skills
4. Optimizing Your Environment
5. Mastering Your Psychology



Again, while there is an understandable mix of these five steps with normal business planning and activities there is a very different focus when coaching a business owner. These steps are taken from the personal perspective of the business owner and his or her personal goals. Let's explore these areas further:

Clarifying Your Direction

Most owners are so busy running their company that they rarely stop to clarify their direction. This is probably because when you start a business you have much more immediate goals like being able to successfully deliver your service, being able to get some business and then as things get rolling make sufficient profit to make payroll and so on.

The effect of this is that except for vague (or grandiose) dreams prior to starting the business owners don't specifically clarify what it is they want out of their business! And as we know, goals are critical to achievement. Once you have goals you can set up metrics to measure them. And, as Peter Drucker famously said, "What gets measured improves".

So the first step in the coaching process is to deeply explore just what it is the owner wants. This process can often be quite revealing to owners, especially if they have not done this exercise during many years of operating their company.

Just the act of thinking about what they want can remove tons of weight from their shoulders. The act of formulating goals is positive motion and starts a powerful psychological process. Did you know that many people, once they make

an appointment with a doctor find that their symptoms improve before the visit or any treatment? That's how powerful simply making a decision about forward progress is!

Still, to get the most powerful results there must be a deeper dive into what might be slowing the owner down, standing in their way or even stopping them from achieving what they want.

If this is done impeccably some very deep patterns can be revealed that uncover the role the owner plays in not getting what he or she wants. This can be a lightning bolt moment for many people to see how they have been sabotaging their own efforts in a variety of ways.

But this is good news indeed because once the pattern is known and understood different choices can be made. Undoing the habits and patterns of a lifetime is hard work but the payoff of being truly fulfilled in terms of creating the life you want is priceless.

Strategizing Your Actions

When faced with this step in the process, many business owners explain that they have all kinds of strategies and plans. They've tried all kinds of things. Sometimes a new initiative every month or two.

Others admit that they have been so busy in working in the business that their plan is to keep the revenue flowing and the doors open and while they have some general ideas as to where they'd like the business to go they don't have a lot of time for planning.

The key to this step in the owner's personal and leadership development process is for the plan, the strategy, the tactics and the specific actions to be in alignment with what the owner wants from his company.

This is often a missing piece that is crucial if the business owner is going to get what he or she wants from owning the business in the first place!

When an owner is clear about his direction, the "right" actions suddenly seem crystal clear. The "wrong" actions seem immediately obvious and the plan for getting the ship back on course becomes known.

The goal is to take the owner's personal vision that they're moving towards and break it down into a year-long plan, a six month plan, a 90 day plan, a 30 day plan and basically a daily plan so every day you wake up knowing exactly what you need to do to achieve the results that you're looking for instead of waking up and thinking, "Should I do this or should I do that?" or "I don't know what to do." or just end up wasting time on the Internet ☹.

This does not mean that these realignments will take place overnight. They require persistent and patient work towards the new set of objectives. And it is vitally important not to lose sight of the goal and the milestones along the way.

Upgrading Your Skills

A good friend of mine once said, "You can't outperform your knowledge". Another friend of mine says, "No business outgrows its leader". And these truths are timeless.

When the owner has clarified his direction and strategized his actions, the missing skills often reveal themselves. Now, to be clear, we are discussing the business owner's skills. The company may require additional skills and these can be obtained by hiring the right people, hiring freelancers or consultants, etc.

The missing skills may be in sales or marketing or they are often leadership, management and operations related. Because all culture flows from the leader, being able to successfully manage the team becomes crucial as the business grows and scales up.



The owner may need additional skills to evaluate the financial health of the company, the workflow processes, how communication flows through the company, hiring and retention protocols and much more.

It can seem like there is so much that can be learned that it can be overwhelming. In fact, it seems that business is a constant process of reinvention. And not only is this exhausting but it is expensive! I have long felt that the money is really made in periods of stability where the “machine” can function as designed for a while without tinkering.

But the problem is that the market is dynamic and not static. Business is always a work in progress or so it seems. And as owners, we must be lifelong learners and at the same time ensure that as we are changing and adapting the business it is still a profit generating machine.

Optimizing Your Environment

The fourth step in this process is to optimize your environment. A lot of times there are subtle things in our environment that hold us back.

Fundamentally, business owners want to create “friction” in their environment to keep them from doing the things they want to not do and eliminate friction in their environment to help them do the things they do want to do.

There are three main environments that can be optimized. One is your physical environment, one is your people environment and the third is your mental environment.

Are you feeding your mind good powerful, positive stuff or junky, negative stuff? And are you surrounded by people who are successful and going places, maybe people who are even more successful than you or are you surrounded by people who aren't as successful as you? Or do you have a spouse who is even fighting against your success?

So those kinds of environmental issues can be a problem so we want to optimize those things so that there's nothing standing in the way of your success.

Mastering Your Psychology

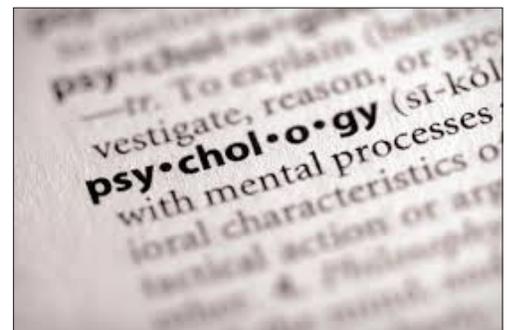
The fifth and final element of coaching is for owners to master their psychology. Now sometimes we don't know what to do, absolutely, and we want to learn more strategies or skills or techniques and that's very powerful. But if we have a fear of going up and talking to a prospective client, that's going to hold us back.

So mastering your psychology is about what is causing you to not do the things that you absolutely know you should do. This can encompass a lot of things. Maybe you need to hire someone to grow your team or maybe you have a hard time holding people accountable because you want them to like you and you're afraid that it will cause some conflict and that fear of conflict could be part of what's holding you back.

Or perhaps you “lose it” from time to time with your staff and even though deep down you know there is a better way to manage your people, you seem unable to control yourself.

If something comes up where you feel like, “Oh man, I know I need to do this and I'm not doing it” and you feel like you need to discipline yourself over and over then this is an indication that you either need to find another way or discover what's going on underneath the surface. To look at what is causing the dread or the anxiety and why you have to approach the problem a particular way.

So mastering your psychology is one of the most powerful aspects of coaching and there are very powerful tools for helping people release those fears, doubts, limiting beliefs, limiting thinking, so that you can blast through these roadblocks and keep moving forward to getting the results that you want.



In conclusion, many owners become entangled by their business for a variety of reasons, mostly based on fear. Once they have created the “monster” they find that they have to serve it, perhaps realizing only after many years that the life that they have created by default was not one they would have intentionally created.

Or, in cases where they are getting a lot of satisfaction out of their business it may be time to think of what comes next, how to create their exit strategy to preserve and protect what they spent many years building.

The bottom line is that a combination of consulting and coaching (or “Coachsulting”) can be an invaluable tool for uncovering the secret roadblocks standing in the way of the life (and business) you want and taking action to remove them. ♦



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