

Growing Your Business Without Losing Your Mind

Cindy Loughran

We all know that in order to start, grow and sustain a business, we need to have a strategic plan, short and long term goals; we need to engage in the right marketing activities, pay attention to expenses, monitor quality and implement consistent processes. These are all the things we learned or would have learned had we gone to business school.

Just because we know what we need to do and we know how to do it, doesn't mean we do it consistently, does it? That's because many business owners don't pay attention to the personal side of growing their business.

Few hold self-care and self-management as high priorities. And many, as they work tirelessly in and on their businesses, burn out, lose their passion and can no longer keep the pace they have grown to expect of themselves. Even fewer look at the deeply personal and powerful issues that *stop* them from doing the things they know they should do and developing strategies to wrestle those demons to the ground. These are the internal business strategies that are underrated and overlooked.

In order to build and sustain any business, in addition to the hard skills, we need to focus on the intangibles: how we spend our time, how we manage our stress, how we relate to others both in and outside the business world. We need to be proactive about our health, build relationships outside the immediate confines of our business and engage in ongoing personal and professional development to, in Stephen Covey's words, "sharpen the saw." We need to understand and overcome our resistance and our fears so that we can realize our grandest visions. In short, we put our self-care and self-management on the same plane as our other business priorities. We need to see the value in being away from our desks and our clients and carve out time for the renewal we need in order to stay fresh and sharp and resilient.

Business owners and other leaders must work on their businesses from the inside out. This process begins with self-examination. Ask yourself some challenging questions: What are my dreams and aspirations? My strengths and weaknesses? Why do I do what I do? (It's not just about the money.) What prevents me from doing the things I know I need to do? (It's not just about the time.) What does the little voice in my head say to me that keeps me from taking bold actions and how can I strip away its power? What saps me of energy and what feeds my soul? How can I organize my work in such a way as to align with that? These are the questions that highly successful people ask and answer. These are the issues that, left unanswered can sneak up and derail you.