

THE ENTREPRENEUR'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

Survive and thrive as a business owner in Canada

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
5 Things I've Learned in 5 Years of Entrepreneurship	5
PART 1: STRATEGY + PLANNING	8
Yes, You Need a Business Plan	10
Planning Like a Boss	13
Disruptive Collaboration	16
PART 2: LEADERSHIP + MANAGING GROWTH	18
Sustainable Growth	19
How to Try New Things	23
Basic Crisis Management.....	28
Celebrating Your Wins.....	30
PART 3: FINANCIAL FIRST AID (AKA MONEY)	33
The First and Biggest Investor in Your Business is...You	35
The Funding Landscape.....	38
Financial Tools and Apps	41
Your Bookkeeping Team	44
PART 4: CULTURE + HR	46
Purpose Driven Companies.....	48
Culture: Why it Matters	50
Team Building and Personality Tests	53
Designing an Office for Productivity.....	58
Canadian Group Benefits.....	62
The Worker Classification Question	64
Parental and Maternity Leave Support.....	67
Leading Change.....	69

PART 5: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT + SELF-CARE	71
Burnout and Stress Management	73
How Hungry are YOU for the WIN?	76
Busy Life Mindfully	79
Calm the @\$% Down	82
4 Easy and Affordable Self-Care Services	85
ADD and Entrepreneurship	86
Entrepreneurs and Relationships	91
Sexuality, Creativity, and Your Business	95
Entrepreneurial Leadership and Conflict Management	97
PART 6: MARKETING	101
The Best Things in Marketing are Free	102
Yes, Photography Matters	106
Video Production for Entrepreneurs	112
5 Underused Content Types	115
Influencer Engagement	118
Social Media Tools	121
Handy Website Tools	123
PART 7: PRODUCTIVITY + EFFICIENCY	125
Quality Control Tips	126
Project Management Software	129
Music Apps to Help You Focus	131
Writing Tools	133
Social Bookmarking	134
Spreadsheet Apps	136
CLOSING	137
Working With a Virtual Assistant	139

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You've established your company and survived the first 3-5 years. You're statistically better off than most businesses, which often fail in those first key years. You may have lost sleep and any semblance of a social life, but you didn't go bankrupt, you had a vision, and you made a thing that is doing that thing that you always dreamed about. WAY TO GO!

You may have gone from worrying about your next dollar to determining how to use that teeny tiny surplus to increase your market share and get that much closer to your dreams. You may be focused on scaling up and growth, growth, growth. You may have hit your Goldilocks point - where everything is just right - and want to maintain it.

In any case, you need to know how to sustain what you have while also building those next important years in your business.

We created The Entrepreneur's Survival Guide specifically for you. We put a call out to our strategic partners, professionals we trust, and business leaders we admire. We asked them to share their best advice about your next steps: how to maintain your momentum, and build on it.

We were blown away by their response, and their desire to help you become successful.

**KEY LEARNING: ASKING DOESN'T HURT.
THE WORST THING ANYONE CAN SAY IS
"NO." MOST OF THE TIME, THEY DON'T.
MOST OF THE TIME, PEOPLE REALLY
WANT TO HELP YOU.**

The result is your very own survival guide, with the compilation of outstanding wisdom from some of our favourite people, as well as some of the most popular insights from [our blog](#).

At Admin Slayer, we know that we won't be successful unless you're successful. We love our community of business owners, and our own internal slayer community that supports it. We want you to have access to every piece of information, insight, tool, and skillset that will rocket you into your version of success. We're behind you 1,000,000%.

Get out there and kill it.

5 THINGS I'VE LEARNED IN 5 YEARS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

By Julia Chung

In 2011, I officially departed from the corporate world where I had spent 15 years learning and growing. It was a safe, organized world, with structured growth and opportunities.

My industry - finance - is lucrative, challenging, and professional. I was doing well and progressing rapidly. But I left. Why?

From some perspectives, it's because I'm off my rocker. I wouldn't necessarily argue. It doesn't seem sensible to release yourself from a sure thing in order to take on massive risk. Don't kid yourself - being an entrepreneur is a massive risk.

It was a risk I was, and am, willing to take. I contemplated the worst possible outcome. Could I handle it? Yes. I contemplated regret. Would I feel it if I didn't accept this challenge? Yes.

Those two answers got me where I am today, on a path that has wound in unexpected directions, with unexpected results.

Here are 5 things I learned along the way.

1. YOUR INCOME WILL CHANGE. A LOT

5 years in, I'm still not making as much money as I was 6 years ago - net to me, that is. From a gross revenues perspective, I'm

killing it. But after expenses and all that, I'm just a little behind. Had I stayed in the corporate world, my net would likely be about 3 times what it is right now, and my risk would be different.

Note that I said "different." I didn't say "nonexistent." As an employee, there's still risk. There's risk that the people running your company will screw up. There's risk that your department will be shut down. There's risk that you will be fired.

Those decisions that were out of my hands as an employee are firmly in my grasp as an entrepreneur. But I have other risks, such as the capital I've invested, the markets I'm working in, and the variability of revenue.

From an income perspective, why would I continue on this path? Because achieving this at 5 years makes sense to me. If revenues continue to grow at this rate, I'll be kicking Corporate Me's ass (from a net income perspective) in another 5 years, and every year thereafter.

2. PEOPLE WILL QUESTION YOUR CHOICES

As in, people you never thought would have an opinion. People who have zero investment in your success.

You'll be able to brush them off.

What will really sting is when the people who are closest to you, who have invested the most in you, and whose opinions you really care about - they'll question you too. Deeply.

In year 1 or 2, when it all goes sideways (as it does), they'll be urging you to quit. The people you so badly want to believe in you, and often the people who count on you to be successful, will see your stress, your losses, your challenges, and they'll tell you to stop. Weirdly, it's because they care about you.

You'll feel desperately alone. And you will be alone. This isn't a road lined with cheerleaders. Despite what social media likes to tell us, it is not a non-stop champagne and Lamborghini party. This is a dark forest, without any visible pathways. You're going to be tired, hungry, and - yes - by yourself.

If you stick it out, you'll find other travellers. You'll find nature laid out paths only you and they can see. You'll hear those people questioning your choices, outside of the forest, and you'll realize it's because they are worried about you, and they don't know how cool it is in here. That's okay. It can be our secret.

3. YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK IS EVERYTHING

Duh. As an Admin Slayer founder, it's clear I believe in this. But why is it such a strong belief?

After all that traveling alone through dark forests, do we really need a support network?

YES. God, yes. So much.

You need a couple of oaks you can lean on. You need somewhere to go for help when the skill set required isn't something you can do. You need people to talk to, people who can help you if you've started down the wrong path or if you need a second set of eyes on that mountain you're getting ready to climb. You need to know that there's someone willing to help you up if you fall.

One of the top reasons businesses fail is a lack of competence. Often the competence is in arenas you'd never intended to enter anyway. Law, tax, administration - that's probably not why you became an entrepreneur. Outsourcing those tasks correctly covers that first level of support you need.

Another reason for failure is incomplete vision. Mentors, champions, and coaches help us clarify and focus. They help us dream bigger, and push us out of our comfort zone. They remind us that we will be more than what we are right now. Finally, a common reason for failure is lack of personal support. Everyone has a different level of requirement, but we've definitely found at Admin Slayer that we need support from our spouses, friends, and each other, in order to create success. It won't be everyone (see point 2) but it can't be no one.

4. YOU'LL GET OPPORTUNITIES YOU NEVER WOULD HAVE DREAMED OF

In addition to launching my own financial planning practice, I was able to co-found Admin Slayer with two fan-fucking-tastic people. It wasn't something I set out to do but it made sense at the time and is already surpassing expectations. I'm now being approached to participate in other ventures with people

I respect and admire. I'm having to be mindful of my capacity, my long-term vision and seek alignment. As an employee, no one approached me about this kind of thing. Doors open all over the place when you climb a few mountains and conquer a few forests.

5. IT'S TOTALLY WORTH IT

At least, I think it is. Ask me again in 5 years.



Julia Chung

*Julia is the CEO (and co-founder) of Admin Slayer and Spring Financial Planning. She is a legit financial professional with all the official credentials you could ask for - and then some. She can calculate the future value of anything in her sleep, except that we're pretty sure she doesn't actually sleep. Julia has never met a financial analysis she couldn't whip into shape, a strategy she couldn't optimize, or a team she couldn't lead. She once went out for groceries and accidentally started 3 businesses. She is often quoted by BBC Capital, the Globe & Mail, and MoneySense magazine as a subject matter expert. All of which is to say: she really knows her s***. Finally, as one of Admin Slayer's token extroverts, Julia does all the talking.*



PART I: STRATEGY + PLANNING

CONTENTS

Yes, You Need a Business Plan	10
Planning Like a Boss	13
Disruptive Collaboration	16

WHAT THE #\$\$@ IS “STRATEGY” ANYWAY?

And who even has TIME to plan?

We get it. You’re busy. You’re making money. You know what you’re doing. All that planning and strategy stuff is for theorists who don’t know how to get out there and (forgive us, Nike), **Just Do It.**

We imagine you out there, with your whip and fedora, swinging vines, cracking jokes, and finding your way to the hidden depths of the temple, just like Indiana Jones.

You know what Indy always had? A map, a smart local guide or two, and a satchel full of supplies.

Like any good archaeologist adventurer, when you’re about to embark on a new journey or the next step on your long, long path, you know it’s important to stop, research where you’re going, rally your resources, and figure out what the next best step is.

Peering into the path ahead, strapped with a toolkit packed full with formulas, strategies, and how-to's for all the hurdles you'll potentially have to leap... that is the difference between success and failure, between surviving and thriving.

Now, when you've beaten the odds and kept your business afloat despite everything, when you've just stopped to breathe, when you're saying to yourself: "Oh wow. I'm really doing this!", **now** is the time to stop just a little while longer, so you can ask yourself some key questions:

- Where are you going?
- Why is it important?

Figuring it out later is for chumps. Smart folks start working on it now.

Are you building a ~~lifestyle business~~ cashflow business¹, or are you building a 'business business'? At the 3-5 year point, you're faced with that decision. A veritable fork in the road.

This path will take you towards team building, professionalization, potential partners, and much more.

That other one? That will have you continuing down the solo path, but with higher levels of demand, huge sea changes, and the requirement that you deliver most of it on your own.

In either case, you need to explore what it means, where that path could potentially take you - both good and bad places - and what it will require from you. Those requirements will be time, effort, decision-making, creativity, finances, and much more. Both paths will risk your reputation every day. Shouldn't you spend the time thinking about it?

We set aside specific time for planning and strategy in every week, quarter, and year. The speed at which information is doubling is increasing every single day. The ability to think critically (one of our favourite topics), to filter the information that's hurtling at you, and apply it appropriately to your specific situation is no longer a nice-to-have - it's mandatory.

And you know what? It's not that hard. We just have to make it important.

¹ Taking a cue from VC Fred Wilson, we've banned the term 'lifestyle business' - it's demeaning and undervalues the very real work that goes into building *any* kind of business.

YES, YOU NEED A BUSINESS PLAN

No, It Doesn't Need to Hurt.

By Jessica Oman

Meet Sheila. As a new entrepreneur, Sheila is hustling - working hard to bring her young makeup company to profitability. She started her business because she wanted the freedom to design her own lifestyle and work on her own terms. She's also passionate about helping women feel and look great, and loves the transformation that her products can bring to her customers.

I've met a lot of Sheilas. And I love them. And when I talk to people like Sheila around December or January I might ask:

"So, what do you want to accomplish in your business this year?"

And the answer I hear more often than any other is: "Well, I want to grow my business." **Well, that's vague.**

"That's awesome," I'll say. "How are you going to do that?" And the Sheilas of the world will say, "I'm going to get more customers."

And that's as far as it goes. Many entrepreneurs have no plan at all for how they're going to achieve the nebulous goal of "growing the business" because very few of them have even

thought through what that means. So, if they achieve growth, they don't know why they succeeded, or what activities generated the best returns. That's fine if you're more concerned about earning money today than having a sustainable business tomorrow. But most of us are dreaming bigger than that.

So what can you and Sheila do? Create a business plan, of course.

If that phrase made you cringe, weep, or roll your eyes, you're not alone. Business plans are old hat - at least, conventional ones are. The good news is, you don't need 80 pages of industry statistics, market data, Gantt charts and endless variations on financial forecasts. You just need a clear outline of what the HECK you're going to focus on this year, and how you're going to measure your success. You can do that by developing a super simple business plan that lays out this year's business goals and the actions required to complete each one. It's literally one page that contains all your goals along with the actions and resources needed to complete them. And there are four easy steps to doing that.

STEP 1: REALIZE THAT BUSINESS PLANNING IS FUN, NOT PAINFUL

Creating a path to a specific goal is unbelievably exciting. You can see the finish line! And you get to do all these fun things on the way there? WOW!

Successful planning starts with being in the right mindset. If you approach planning as a laborious, boring and uninspiring chore, that's what it will be. But if instead you can reframe the exercise as one that reveals insight about your business that you can act on and see positive results from quickly, then the task suddenly becomes enjoyable.

STEP 2: OUTLINE SPECIFIC, MEANINGFUL ACHIEVEMENT

Don't pull a number out of the air like "I'm going to increase revenue by 25% this year." Instead, choose goals that:

- Bring you closer to your long-term business vision and support your purpose for being in business
- You WANT to take action on every single day
- Are realistic – but ambitious – given your existing financial and human resources

You've heard that goals should be SMART: specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and time-sensitive (or some version of that acronym). Don't pooh-pooh it; it's true. Ambiguous goals are never achieved because you have no way of knowing whether or not you achieved them.

Craft 3 to 5 goals that you can accomplish within a year and that excite the heck out of you. Next to each, write 3 to 5 actions you can take in the next 3 months that will move you closer to reaching your goals. As you complete each action, cross it off (and write subsequent actions if necessary). You'll feel amazing seeing the progress you're making.

STEP 3: DESIGN YOUR OWN SCAVENGER HUNT

Scavenger hunts are the BEST, am I right? The other key piece of your business plan is to source out all of the resources (people, money, time) you'll need to finish each step. Once you've done that, you'll have to hunt those resources down. Maybe you hire a contractor. Maybe you take out a small loan. Maybe you get a dog walker for a few months to free up additional time to work on your business. Be honest with yourself about the help you need to accomplish your goals, and then relentlessly hunt down that support.

STEP 4: EVALUATE QUARTERLY

People criticize business plans by saying "as soon as you're finished, it's already out of date." That's absolutely true. You can't predict the future and unexpected things are guaranteed to occur this year. By evaluating your plan quarterly, you can quickly "tack" (to use a sailing term) and see how to get back on course. For example, if one of your goals was to add four new products to your line of natural makeup but in April you still haven't launched the first one, you can look back at the

action steps you developed in December to see if you missed any, or whether the plan no longer makes sense because circumstances have changed.

This evaluation means you won't be throwing your hands in the air come next October, wondering why your business hasn't

grown the way you wanted it to. If it hasn't, you'll now know exactly why.

Now, the next time someone asks you "so, what do you want to accomplish in your business this year?" you don't have to be like Sheila. You can confidently state where your company is headed, knowing you have a workable plan to get there.

Goal #1:	Required Actions:	Required Resources:
	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
	4	4
	5	5



Jessica Oman

Jessica is the sassy business expert behind Renegade Planner, creating business plans for new entrepreneurs that lenders and investors simply will not reject. She knows what kind of funding is available, and which one is the right one for you. She's also an Adjunct Professor at UBC's Sauder School of Business, an AirBNB host, and just happens to know exactly how to make money off of that abandoned storage locker.

PLANNING LIKE A BOSS

From the Admin Slayer blog

We understand that there are some people who aren't excited about planning - some people for whom the very idea of planning seems like a restrictive chain, holding you back from creativity, freedom, and achievement.

Other people are just *too busy* for planning. There's so much going on right now, who has time to map out the future? And, really, is it even worth it?

You don't even know how alien these ideas are for us but, since one of us is a financial planner, we might be a little biased when it comes to this topic. However, that bias is well-earned - we know planning works.

Planning of any kind - business, financial, personal - actively creates success. The truth is that creating and making use of plans (reviewing, updating) *actually* improves whatever aspect of your world that you're working on. Whether that's making your business viable and sustainable, building a retirement or buying a home, or just figuring out where you're taking this life you've got, planning really, [truly works](#).

While planning [improves your likelihood of success](#), it doesn't have to be boring, and it doesn't have to be restrictive. Remember that a plan is simply a map. It's not a cage. It's a

guide, and a pathway. You may take detours - but you know where the main road is, and you can judge how far you've gone.

Want to be even more successful in your planning? ***Don't do it on your own.***

Here's why:

We humans are an optimistic bunch. Sometimes, that optimism can bite us in the ass - and those bites go really deep when it comes to planning.

Our optimism makes us really bad at estimating anything that we do ourselves. All of us. You're not special (*well, you're special, but not in this specific way*). Whether it's how long a task will take, how much it will cost, or the gain you'll enjoy from getting it done - if you're the one doing it, you are going to underestimate the work and overestimate the benefit.

Even familiar tasks that you do all the time. Even tasks you've done before. Don't feel bad; every other human on the planet has the same biased approach to their own work.

It's actually called the "planning fallacy" and you can read more about it [here](#).

Here's the really interesting part: *"The bias only affects predictions about one's own tasks; when outside observers predict task completion times, they show a pessimistic bias, overestimating the time needed."* We clearly think that other people will take much, much longer than we would ourselves for the same task. In reality, we're better off estimating someone else's time for them, and having them estimate our own. It's why we need that second set of eyeballs on our plan.

On a related note, we also tend to overestimate what we can accomplish in the short term and underestimate what we can accomplish in the long term. This means that if you're only ever looking at the short term, you're bound to be disappointed. Focusing on the long term, and frequently doing better than you'd estimated, will only improve your mood, and motivate you towards greater success.

"WE ALWAYS OVERESTIMATE THE CHANGE THAT WILL OCCUR IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS AND UNDERESTIMATE THE CHANGE THAT WILL OCCUR IN THE NEXT TEN. DON'T LET YOURSELF BE LULLED INTO INACTION."

— Bill Gates

REALISTIC PLANNING: STEPS TO CREATING AND STICKING TO YOUR PLAN

1. **The first step of realistic planning is knowing how much time you actually have to work with.** Your time is, of course, affected by things outside of your control. But just because you can't control them, doesn't mean you can't plan for them. Start with a year-long view of your calendar. If your kids will be off of school for 2 weeks for spring break, put it in the calendar. Birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, vacations - all of it goes in the calendar. Be realistic about the fact that you will need to spend time with your family and your friends during these periods, more time than usual, and plan for it.
2. **Set your goals for the year** (or even better, the next 3-5 years). These can include:
 - Revenue
 - # of new clients or customers
 - Projects like launching a website, opening a new location, investing in equipment or hiring staff.
3. **Break your goals down into quarterly targets.** Bear in mind that if you plan to take any vacation time (and yes, you need to take vacation time), then you'll need to be more productive in the quarters that are not affected by vacations and seasonal trends. One of the big reasons that entrepreneurs burn out is that they fail to build rest periods

into their plans. And then summer comes around and they haven't hit their targets and they think "I couldn't possibly take time off now!" This is why completing these steps in order is so important. Book your time off first, then set your goals, then start mapping out your quarters. Once you've got your quarterly targets, break them down by month, and then by week. As with the quarterly targets, your monthly and weekly targets will be affected by holidays, long weekends, visiting in-laws, whatever.

4. **Review your goals with someone else** (remember what we said about estimating your own timelines?)

5. **Set a reminder to review your goals weekly, quarterly, and yearly**, ideally with someone who will help keep you accountable.
6. **Celebrate your wins.** It will keep you motivated to stick to the plan.
7. **Importantly, be flexible to change.** Remember, your plan is a roadmap, an outline. Life will come along and knock you off course. When you manage to pick yourself up, wipe the dirt from your hands, and start walking back, it'll be handy to know where you left off, and where you can jump back in.

DISRUPTIVE COLLABORATION

By Julia Chung

In the world of start-ups and new businesses, it's no longer enough to simply make your mark on an industry - you need to "disrupt" it. Disruption is Exciting! It's New! It's Better!! Disruption could mean anything from thumbing your nose at traditional delivery and operations models, to applying concepts from another industry, to changing how money is made and how the market is served.

Until the advent of Napster, YouTube and other sharing platforms, musicians needed a record label with a torturous seven year contract to become well-known and profitable. The last twenty years have been a time of wild disruption in the music industry, with stars like Justin Bieber hurtling into the public consciousness (and right through its wallet) thanks to viral video and internet sensation. While this may have reduced record sales significantly, it's released the listening public from spoon-fed music genres and opened up a world of variety. Today, you can support your favourite artists with tools like [Patreon](#) (more disruption!), which allow us to contribute directly to the artists we value the most.

We're currently experiencing intense disruption in the financial services industry as well, with the arrival of online providers such as [robo-advisors](#), advice-only financial planners, and

branchless banks. Canadian banks are facing heavy backlash over [sketchy sales tactics](#) just at the same time that we are gaining access to different services on different platforms.

Disruption can be fantastic. But is disruption in and of itself the goal? In some cases, disruption can end up being more about the ego of the business owner than about improving the lives of the people being served. If you're considering disrupting your industry, ask yourself: Do my customers really want to have their lives disrupted in this particular way? Because it's never, ever, about you.

Disruption can pit companies against each other, often to the detriment of the market they serve. In a winner-take-most scenario, business owners become suspicious and fearful, scared that they will lose market share. Fear and suspicion begin to seep into their company culture, into conversations with customers, and finally throughout the entire industry. Customers experience the distrust and apply it to the industry as a whole. Value is lost. Commoditization follows as everyone competes on price, and a race to the bottom rings the death toll of what was once a lively and booming industry.

Disruption can be exciting, but it can also be incredibly harmful if applied incorrectly. Want to disrupt in a healthy way? We'd like you to consider disrupting... through collaboration.

We're all better when we work together. You need to have the right teammates, of course. Even in collaboration with the best of intentions, things can go sideways. Take the finance industry's self-regulating organizations for instance, which in some cases have banded industry participants together to protect themselves, as opposed to the people they serve.

You need teammates who share your values, and value your customers. By working with the right people to disrupt an industry, the industry becomes stronger, more work is created for everyone, customers receive better service and products - and keep coming back for more. A sustainable business is one that is in a sustainable industry, with customers who value it.

BUILD YOUR COLLABORATION TEAM

That's all fine and good, Admin Slayer, you may be thinking, but how exactly do I create effective collaboration? We're so glad you asked!

- Keep the focus on the customer. Your disruptive collaboration should make their lives better.
- Don't assume that anyone else cares about your collaboration beyond the value it creates for the customer. Skip the lame press releases. Drop your ego. Nobody cares.
- Talk about values. A lot. Write them down. Show them to people. Show them to each other. All the time.
- Create space for everyone to make money, to learn, and to grow.
- Always leave a door open for collaborators to exit without anyone getting upset.
- Treat formal business partnerships like a marriage:
 - What does everyone need from the partnership? How will you deliver it?
 - How will you handle the inevitable disagreements?
 - Talk about values (again) and feelings - regularly.
 - Who will be in charge of what decisions?
 - How will each party exit gracefully?

Your competition can also be your team. If we remove fear and suspicion, replacing it with shared values, hard work, and a focus on your customer, it can take an industry (and your business) into the stratosphere.



PART 2: LEADERSHIP + MANAGING GROWTH

CONTENTS

Sustainable Growth.....	19
How to Try New Things	23
Basic Crisis Management	28
Celebrating Your Wins.....	30

Growth. The Holy Grail. The Pot of Gold at the end of the Rainbow. That place where you're going, *oh the places you'll go!* (Apologies - and deep love - to Dr. Seuss). Growth is amazing. It's all those things we said up there. Growth is also really goddamn hard. Doing your thing really, really well? You know how to do that. But adding more humans into the picture? Scaling your systems and processes? When you go from being an expert at that thing you do to leading a team, you suddenly have to develop a number of new skill sets. From [team building and culture maintenance](#), to [processes, leadership and management](#), to increased [financial complexity](#), actual [marketing](#), and the careful shift from these clients to those clients, there's a lot going on. At the same time, you hopefully have a [personal life that you want to maintain](#). Before taking on all of those different pieces, we'd like you to just spend some time in your brain space, creating the growth opportunities you want, and managing the inevitable crises that arrive with grace.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

What to Do When You Have More Business Than You Can Handle

From the Admin Slayer blog

In the beginning, you could barely get anyone to talk to you. The door stayed shut, and people just passed you by. You sent proposals, you tried to make connections, you networked like a demon. You gave discounts just so someone - anyone - would work with you. "Niche clients" were a hilarious concept.

Then suddenly... all the chickens came home to roost at the same time.

- Every potential client you've sent a proposal to decides to proceed.
- Every referral source you've been cultivating sends you three new clients.
- Every marketing initiative you've tried starts paying dividends, and customers are beating a path to your door.

AND IT'S ALL HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.

This isn't just rain. This isn't just pouring. This is a veritable typhoon. You don't want to complain - this is your dream. You're blessed, lucky even. The model you built, the value you're selling - people are *finally* getting it!

But did they all have to "get it" at exactly the same moment?

KEEPING THE WHEELS ON THE BUS

How do you capitalize on all of this amazing growth, without going crazy, burning out, disappointing customers, or alienating your team? There's no one right answer, but we can tell you what we did.

First, we believed from the beginning that it was going to happen. One day, there would be more business than we alone could handle, and we would need to be prepared.

For us, being prepared meant starting with processes. It makes solid sense to write down the "how" of **every single thing** that happens in your business, from talking to customers, providing a product or service, invoicing, collecting payments, and more. And every time that "how" changes, update the document.

This one small step means that when things get nuts, and there is more business than you have time to handle, it's easy to pass on tasks to other people. You spend less time on training, and more time on managing the inflow.

Second, we built a team that is modular and flexible. This means constantly hiring and training, particularly in those moments when you *aren't busy*.

Once you're too busy, it's too late. It is MUCH harder to recruit and train when you're struggling just to keep up with the work. You need a reliable, consistent, and well-trained team that is ready to go when you are.

Before the sheep hit the fan, when you have a little less than the "right" amount of business, that's the time to really go hard on creating your working system.

Start planning your time off, your holidays, and other commitments as early as possible. Get your team to do the same thing. Know when you're likely to be short-handed. You want to build deadlines for training - and **cross training** - long before those times arrive. Cross training ensures that more than one person knows how to handle any one task, allowing your business to run like a smooth, well-oiled machine, no matter who has their hands on the wheel.

But...what if you don't have the cash flow to pay for that team right now? Well, exactly. That's the chicken-or-egg issue for every business. No one wants a ton of overhead without the revenue to justify it. We built Admin Slayer to provide for our own businesses in exactly this way (we are our own best client). You *don't* need to increase your permanent headcount,

but you *do* need to invest in building out your support network.

Getting Started

SET GOALS AND LIMITS

If you've planned out your revenue targets for the year (and as you know from reading the previous section, we totally recommend that you do), then you know how much business you need to reach them. If it's halfway through the year and you are behind, that means you need to make it up - so this new flurry of activity might be completely welcome.

You also need to be honest with yourself about how much you can *actually* do. This might mean any of the following:

Putting someone else in charge of your calendar - and giving them the authority to say "no" to you. When you're tempted to say "YES" - to a new client, a rush order, a business development opportunity, etc. - you've got someone who is well aware of the limits you've carefully laid out for yourself, and who will let you know when you're being unreasonably optimistic.

Adjusting your targets. Once you've done the math (please, do the math) on what you can actually accomplish as a mortal human being, and not the superhero you dreamed about becoming, you may need to make some adjustments. This could mean adjusting your revenue targets down (booooo) or

adjusting your reliance on technology and team members up (yaaaaaay). If you don't yet have the team you need to manage the inevitable fluctuations, you will need to simply downgrade your revenue growth expectations, but upgrade your team building recommendations - and move your growth expectations to the next period. Build the structure before you start selling from it.

SET EXPECTATIONS AND OVER-COMMUNICATE

If you're currently in the thick of a really busy period, you likely don't have time for any of the above. Here's what you can do right now:

Have a trusted resource outside of your team, where you can send new business that either (a) isn't a good fit, or (b) arrives at a time when you simply cannot take on any new work. When we say "trusted", we really mean that. It means someone who can deliver at or near your standards. It means someone who will say good things about you, as often as you're saying good things about them. This resource is a strategic partner in your business. The relationship must be incredibly strong.

Understand what "good fit" means for you and your business. The people you are sending to your trusted resource are the ones who are almost-but-not-quite-perfect, and always take more time and energy than that ideal client. You know who we mean.

Be honest with everyone and give them options. Even when you're in [complete crisis mode](#), there's a right way to handle it to make sure that clients and potential clients don't get pissed off.

Don't assume that you know what your customer wants, or what they're willing to compromise on. Ask. People HATE waiting, more than almost anything else - unless they feel as though they are choosing to wait. If you suddenly get 5 new clients at once, and you know that there is no way you can deliver to all of them at your normal standards - don't compromise your standards. Approach them with a frank explanation of what you can reasonably deliver, and when. You may be surprised to discover that not only do people understand your perspective and appreciate being given a choice, they will probably want you more. (We are continually surprised by this reality. Oh, and you can probably raise your price at this juncture, too.)

Here's a basic template for explaining your situation in a professional and courteous way.

Hi [potential client name],

Glad to hear that you would like to proceed with the proposal! I should let you know that since I first sent it to you, I've had an unexpected amount of new business inquiries. In order to provide the quality of service my clients expect, I'd like to offer you a few options:

- *If you need to get started right away, I can commit (x hours, basic/reduced service, etc)*
- *If you're not in a big rush, let's set our start date (in 2 weeks' time, next month, etc) when I can give you a greater amount of focused attention*
- *If you'd rather not wait, I can introduce you to a trusted colleague of mine who has more capacity, right away*

- *If you have some flexibility and would be interested in paying reduced fees, we could get started with a junior team member whose work will be supervised by me*

Honesty and good business go hand-in-hand. No, really. Trust your customers and business associates to be human beings who know what it's like to live life. Trust them to understand their own needs, pick the best option for them, and come back to you for more.

HOW TO TRY NEW THINGS

Without Burning Out and Going Broke

From the Admin Slayer blog

You likely have a million ideas right now (*Start a podcast! Spend more time on Twitter! Run a contest!*), and while you can't do **all** the things, you should do **some** of the things. What will be tough is deciding which projects to take on, and where to spend your all-too-limited budget.

We can't tell you exactly which projects will work for you and your business, but we can share with you our method for testing new ideas - we have so many ideas - so you can take advantage of opportunities without killing yourself or your bank balance.

The Hudson's Bay Start

If you're a Canadian, you know all about this illustrious company that built a legacy on trapping and hunting in Colonial Canada (and a [reputation](#)). What you may not know is that they managed to outlast other similar companies thanks to one key practice: The Hudson's Bay Start.

Canada's winter wilderness is not for the faint of heart. Surviving in it for months two or three centuries ago was

serious business. The Hudson's Bay Company's competitors quite literally died out. Here's how they stayed alive:

Before every excursion, the fur traders would pack their equipment, set off in their canoes, and camp - a short distance from home, just for one night.

Why go to all the trouble for just one night? Why not spend one more night in warmth and safety? Given the limitations of the short trading season, this false start cost the traders precious time.

But the difference between life and death could be made by that one supply item that was forgotten and discovered during this test run.

Unlike other traders, the Hudson's Bay Company had everything they needed for each expedition. Mistakes were corrected, traders survived, and business continued - for well over 300 years - thanks to this easy but time consuming risk management tool.

Your Hudson's Bay Start

How can you put this proven method to work? We are so glad you asked!!

Before the expedition

Choose an area you'd like to develop in your business. Set a limit on the amount of resources you're willing to commit. Make peace with the fact that you may lose everything you risk here.

By setting this limit, you're less likely to fall prey to the '[sunk cost fallacy](#)'. If your expedition is a bust, you need to know when to cut your losses, and it's easier to do that early on, before you get emotionally invested in a project.

On that note, it's good to remind yourself that even if your experiment doesn't turn out the way you're hoping it will, that doesn't mean it's a failure.

Finding out that a certain something doesn't work is productive. Failing to recognize that it's not working and continuing to put effort in, however, is not.

Taking the leap

Here are some examples of projects you can try.

BUSINESS AREA: CONTENT MARKETING

COMMON MISTAKE:

Start a blog! And then realize how much time it takes and abandon it after your 4th post. Leave the blogs and all the announcements on your website so everyone can see how inconsistent you are.

YOUR HUDSON'S BAY START:

Write one article. What did you like/not like about the process? How can you improve both the process and the writing?

How many ideas can you come up with?

How often can you reasonably commit to completing an article?

Is that effective enough to achieve your end goal, or is this something you can outsource?

THEN:

Commit to doing one original article a month.

Develop a content calendar for inspiration and article ideas.

Block off time to research, write, and edit. Recognize which parts of this process you aren't good at or dislike, and outsource them.

BUSINESS AREA: EMAIL MARKETING

COMMON MISTAKE:

Announce your new monthly newsletter, send out one, and then forget about it for another two months. Remember it, and start to hate it. Reflect your hatred in the low quality delivery of your product.

YOUR HUDSON'S BAY START:

Look into email newsletters you *actually* read. Not that many, are there?

Make a list: What do you like? What don't you like? Create a clear vision of what your email newsletter is supposed to achieve, and the message you want to deliver.

Then send one, without making any promises. Ask for feedback in a survey, with a list of items that your audience might want to see. In exchange, offer them something nice - like a prize - for filling out your feedback.

THEN:

Create a structure for your newsletter. A template will help you stay consistent and on message without having to reinvent the wheel every time. Develop a content calendar for inspiration and messaging consistency. Create a timeline to research, write, edit, and build your newsletter. Again, recognize which parts of this process you aren't good at or dislike, and outsource them.

BUSINESS AREA: SOCIAL MEDIA

COMMON MISTAKE:

Create a bunch of profiles on social media channels. Follow 5 or 6 people. Post 3 things, promising more to come. Allow your social media presence to die on the vine.

YOUR HUDSON'S BAY START:

Get an understanding of which social media channels your audience actually uses. Which ones are you using already? What does your audience like to read? Who do they interact with?

Ask your existing clients (or those you want as clients): what do they like to read? Which channels/companies/individuals do they interact with? Look them up. What do they have in common?

Start with one channel, hopefully one you feel comfortable with, and make a commitment to read and interact regularly. Social media is just that - social. It's not an advertising channel, and the key here is building relationships.

THEN:

Once you know what kind of commitment social media requires, and have examined your own involvement, determine whether or not this is (1) useful and (2) something you enjoy.

Using your content calendar, develop a posting/interaction process. How often will you be posting/interacting? What part

of it do you like/dislike? What can you outsource, and what should you keep?

Remember that messaging and branding remain important with social media, just like with your website and your in-person delivery. You must be **consistent**. That's why we keep repeating the content calendar - it's how you stay that way.



BUSINESS AREA: ADVERTISING

COMMON MISTAKE:

You spend \$X for an advertising campaign that lasts 6 months because you got a great deal on the package. You slam out a piece as quick as possible to take advantage of the great deal. Six months later, your unfocused campaign has received no responses or clicks.

YOUR HUDSON'S BAY START:

Figure out what media your audience is actually interacting with. Ask other businesses that advertise in that channel what their experience was like. Did they receive responses? Was the cost worth the business? Did they have differing levels of responses based on season/type of advertising?

Determine what you want to achieve with advertising. More visits to your location/website? Building a following? Actual direct sales? Get focused.

Craft one piece in the best potential channel, with a specific result in mind. Make it look professional. Half-assed ads look half-assed and make your company look worse than if you had no ads.

THEN:

Review the results. Did the advertisement achieve the minimum result you were looking for? What can you change/tweak/adjust to make it better? Trust us, this was cheaper than a 6 month campaign that didn't work.

BUSINESS AREA: HIRING

COMMON MISTAKE:

You need someone - now! You hire the cheapest person you can find, spend very little time training them, and discover they are not a fit and/or can't do the work you needed them to do.

YOUR HUDSON'S BAY START:

Create a project, with expectations and instructions. Give this to potential hires (and pay them to do it). Review the output - and find your match.

Yes, that might mean paying a few people for terrible work. But that's a few people one time as opposed to one person many times.

THEN:

Really nail down what you liked/didn't like and what you need/don't need. Understand that most people can't be amazing at every aspect of your business and it's better to hire two amazing part-timers than one full-timer who is excellent at one thing but terrible at another.

BUSINESS AREA: BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

COMMON MISTAKE:

You met someone! They're amazing! You partner up.

One year later, you hate them. Then you break up and it costs you money and reputation.

YOUR HUDSON'S BAY START:

GO SLOW. Seriously. Do one or two projects together, with minimal commitment. Get to know how they work. Understand what is important to them.

THEN:

This is actually a book. There's so much here. But take it slow. Business partnerships are marriages, and few divorces are happy.

BASIC CRISIS MANAGEMENT

By Julia Chung

It was a beautiful Good Friday morning, and the ferry terminal was packed. As online reservations were entirely booked, we threw caution to the wind and attempted to get the 9:20 sailing.

We didn't make it.

On the upside, we were definitely on the 11:30 sailing and had about 2 hours to kill on a leisurely breakfast overlooking the bay. Unsurprisingly, we weren't the only ones who decided to make use of the extra time by filling our faces. Line-ups spilled out on to the sidewalks of every eatery and coffee shop in picturesque Horseshoe Bay. Even the 7-11 was at maximum capacity.

We chose the [olive + anchor](#), a little gourmet, organic free-range whole food kind of establishment. It used to house Ya-Yas Oyster Bar, and was transformed by the next generation family members of Ya-Yas original owners.

We were seated more rapidly than expected and happily took in the view.

And waited.

The restaurant was filling and the staff were run off their feet. We had time. The food looked and smelled worth it. The servers acknowledged us and let us know they were on their way to help. We told them to take their time.

When our friendly but harried server arrived, she looked a little concerned. There was a problem.

"We've run out of eggs. We've actually run out of almost everything."

She gave us our options: we could leave and find repast elsewhere. Or, we could stay. Beverages and soup would be free.

We watched another table of diners get up quickly and depart. We weighed our options... and took the soup.

As we chatted with the servers we learned that, while the restaurant had been serving dinner successfully for many years, breakfast was a new option that had only been in operation for the previous 5 months. Before Good Friday they'd served no more than 6 breakfasts in a day during that period. From the looks of it, more than 40 people showed up just in the hour

that we were there. They'd had to close the doors until lunch, and create a new breakfast strategy for the spring and summer.

I'll be coming back to the olive + anchor whenever I'm in Horseshoe Bay (which is a lot) going forward. Here's why:

Communication: in full out stress mode, we can often attempt to hide our shortcomings from those people the shortfalls most strongly affect, like our customers. While the staff and owners weren't excited that they were dealing with a crisis, they were honest and upfront about what they were dealing with and why. Since I'm a human, I can empathize. I appreciated the consideration.

Professionalism: regardless of the stress and crisis, this team clearly understood that their problem wasn't our problem. They made sure we were given options and opportunities to take care of what was important to us - getting some food and making the ferry. They understood their role in the customer's day.

Service: we were treated courteously and kindly throughout our visit. Just because one piece of the puzzle fell apart, it didn't mean that the entire box was thrown out. They knew

that opening their doors to us meant fulfilling a promise. They weren't able to fill 100% of that promise but they tried to fulfill as much as they could.

Solutions: they recognized what the problem was, acknowledged where they fell short, apologized, and provided us with a choice of solutions. They even went so far as to let us know that they are strategizing a solution to ensure it doesn't happen again.

Whether I'm working with an employee, a strategic partner, or a service provider, there's one situation that tells me whether they're worth my time: how they handle a crisis.

CRISES HAPPEN TO EVERYONE

They're embarrassing and difficult. Handle it gracelessly and you lose customers. Handle it professionally, and you build loyal clientele.

What finally clinched my return to the olive + anchor? The tomato & gin soup was outstanding. We didn't receive a bill, but our server received a tip, and the restaurant has 3 returning customers.

CELEBRATING YOUR WINS

From the Admin Slayer blog

You've had a rough day. Every conversation you've had has started off rocky and ended with "No." Your top line and your bottom line aren't talking to each other, and you're starting to think about the benefits of having a J-O-B again.

All the pro-entrepreneur magazines and articles remind you that confidence is one of the key ingredients to your eventual success. That people, whether they are customers, strategic partners, or suppliers, can smell your desperation, your lack of hope, and your fear. Oh, and they can tell when you're being "inauthentic" too, so even though you're absolutely scared shitless, don't act like it - and be entirely honest at the same time.

No big deal, right?

Wrong. That's tough. Come on - let's be serious here. You're having a rough go. You're riding that emotional roller coaster, and currently you're at the bottom of the hill. You're doubting your business model. You're doubting your partners, your staff, your customers - and yourself. Today is a day when everyone around you should just GO AWAY, and you should go hide under your bed sheets.

Maintaining any kind of confidence is extremely hard work no matter what kind of human you are, no matter what you do for a living. Maintaining confidence in the face of building a business can seem impossible. So how do all those Richard Bransons and Elon Musks and Steve Jobs and that guy/gal down the street who clearly is more successful than you and always seem to be so calm* keep going?

*(*We know that guy/gal down the street. They're scared shitless too, and they think you're smarter and more successful than they are. Trust us. We've talked to them.)*

We can't really speak to how those big name entrepreneurs maintain their confidence, but we can speak to our own experience. At Admin Slayer, we like to locate and leverage our super powers. One of our founders - if you've met us, you know which one - has had hers identified by the rest as *Self Esteem*. As a result, we know a thing or two about feeding that fire.

Confidence does not come in a handy little package at birth, along with the colour of your eyes and the size of your hands. Confidence does not suddenly arrive at the attainment of

that *one big goal*. Confidence does not come from the admiration of others.

We don't blame you if you have ever thought that any of the above is true, even if in secret. We've been taught through the school and employment systems that large goal attainment and the admiration of others are exactly where we find self-worth. That worth itself comes from an external place. As students and employees, if we work with great leaders, we will be provided with the external feedback that might keep us in a positive place.

But once we release ourselves into the wilds of business ownership and entrepreneurship, we discover that the kind of external feedback that we have been living off of is almost entirely missing.

Our partners, friends, and family sometimes think we're crazy. They might tell us that we don't have a good idea. Or that we did have one, but it's the wrong time, and having a regular paycheque now is more important, more valuable, less destructive than building towards that *thing* that we're doing with that business.

Our customers, if we're lucky, appreciate what we do, and they pay us for it. That's some external validation we can build on. But what if our customers are few and far between right now, or maybe they don't always appreciate what we do in a way that we can feel? (Money, we've discovered, is not an emotion,

and it does not actually boost your self-confidence - but it can increase your sense of stability.)

What we're missing is a Gold Star, a Performance Review, a *promotion*, an A+. External validation that we've been taught to strive towards, and achieve, and as business owners, that type of validation is too little, and often, too late.

At Admin Slayer, we like Gold Stars a lot. We try to give them to each other as much as possible because we know exactly how important being appreciated is. But we also give *ourselves* Gold Stars, and we do it every week.

WHAT WE DO

So this might feel stupid. If you've never done anything like it, it will *definitely* feel stupid. If you're a nice, self-deprecating Canadian, it will feel self-aggrandizing and immoral. Ignore that. You need this. You need fuel. You need to stop feeling desperate. You need confidence - and you need it to be authentic.

Here's how.

- Carve out time at the beginning of your week. For a lot of people this is first thing Monday morning, but hey, your week might look different than everybody else. About 30 minutes should do it.

- No, you are not planning the week ahead. Come back here, cowboy/cowgirl/cowperson!
- Open up your calendar/task list/whatever you use to stay on track from last week.
- Find 3 things - just 3 - that you did last week that you are proud of/were achievements.
- Write down what each of those 3 things were.
- Write down why you feel proud of those 3 points of pride/achievements. *Note: They don't always have to be business related. Having one of those items be personal is probably a good thing. Practicing being a whole person is another key ingredient to entrepreneurial success.*
- Write down what else you will do to further this achievement, and think of a final goal. For instance, let's say you wrote a cool article and you're proud of it. You posted it to your blog. This might be part of your bigger goal of driving more traffic to your site and developing new business.
- Write down what you will do *this* week to further that achievement. In the above example, you might be adding this to your newsletter and social media channel this week, or sharing it with specific people and asking them if they'd be interested in reposting (perhaps in exchange for you posting one of theirs).

Keep this in your work space. Keep a copy of it in a binder or digital folder in week-by-week order, so you can see each

achievement on your journey. Take it out and review it regularly. We like both quarterly and annual reviews, as these help us drive decisions for the next large chunk of time.

Doesn't sound hard does it? That's the thing: it's not hard. It's really easy. So easy you might imagine that it's not effective and give up on it. But it is incredibly effective. It's what makes seemingly impossible things possible. Because of this one little 30 minute activity once a week:

1. You start every week feeling really proud of yourself.
2. You realize that you're not a hack after all, and you do some damn good stuff.
3. You've connected last week's wins to this week's actions - and created a foundation on which to build your greatest achievements.

**"A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES
BEGINS WITH ONE STEP."**

- Lao Tzu

If you count each step as an achievement, you'll have the wherewithal and the confidence to see yourself through to the end of those 1,000 miles.



PART 3: FINANCIAL FIRST AID (AKA MONEY)

CONTENTS

The First and Biggest Investor in Your Business is...You	35
The Funding Landscape	38
Financial Tools and Apps	41
Your Bookkeeping Team	44

It's funny how long it often takes people to get to this topic: Money.

And not just money, friend: Profit

Your "why" may not be solely about the cash, but the cash has to play a pretty significant role for you to want to be in business. You may want to replace your income, or you may want to become wildly, insanely wealthy. Both are great reasons, and both are money reasons, and there are a ton of other reasons that fit somewhere between the two.

Some people get pretty squeamish about money. It can be hard to hit "send" on an invoice. It can be difficult to know when to ask for the business. It can be tough to even talk about it, or answer the question: how much does this cost?

Most service providers start their business under-pricing, assuming that "no one" will pay them whatever amount sits

in their mind as unattainable, so they must hustle, hustle, hustle, over deliver, and get underpaid. There comes a point where this becomes tiresome, and unreasonable. There comes a point where you realize that you do, in fact, add value: where the phone is ringing off the hook; the onslaught of emails is out of control; and you are having a hard time just keeping up. Hint: This is the time when you raise your prices.

Once you start receiving the money - and spending the money - you have to figure out how to keep track of it. You need a structure, a system, and some banking services. You need an accountant, you need to file reports. You need to understand what that cash flow means to you, how to analyze the data, and then how to use that data to make strong decisions going forward. What needs to happen to move in the right direction? What kinds of targets should you be setting? How do you pay yourself? How do you pay your team?

From there, whether you're at the beginning or moving to the next level, every business owner struggles to determine exactly how much they need. Many business owners - particularly female business owners - go the bootstrapping route, eating only what they kill and subsisting on low wages and hard work for an inordinate period of time, in order to avoid debt. Sometimes that's the best option. Other times, it's a never-ending spiral that takes you back to square one each and every year, because your business, for whatever reason, simply cannot get to your industry's penthouse level without an injection of cash.

If you've decided that cash is the answer, then where do you get it from? The world of financing is complex. What does it mean for you, at your size, with your ideas? Do you need a loan? Do you need investors? Who do you talk to about what's available, and how do you access the capital? **Read on.**

THE FIRST AND BIGGEST INVESTOR IN YOUR BUSINESS IS...YOU

By Bonnie Foley-Wong

CBInsights, a technology-driven company that provides research, data, and information for deal sourcing, due diligence, and market and competitive intelligence, analyzed 101 startup failure post-mortems since 2014 and found that the [second most frequently cited](#) reason for failure was that the company ran out of cash. Having access to sources of capital, raising capital and allocating it wisely is critical for business success.

I have spent years financing and investing in a wide range of entrepreneurial businesses – from angel investments as small as \$10,000 to large financings as big as half a billion dollars – and based on that experience, I've seen recurring patterns and behaviours amongst successful entrepreneurs. The following advice is universal for anyone looking for business capital.

MEET PEOPLE BEFORE YOU NEED TO MEET THEM

This is true about a lot of different situations and couldn't be truer for financing. Even the most experienced and seasoned entrepreneurs turn to people in their existing network, that they know well, with whom there exists a great deal of mutual trust, and with whom they have great relationships. To get to the point of having aligned investors in your network already, you need to meet them before you need to meet them.

Women entrepreneurs take note though: the Diana Project [reported in 2014](#) that women are excluded from networks of growth capital finance and appeared to have insufficient contacts with investors and financiers. Women entrepreneurs need to take extra steps, and take them early, to develop the networks of funding that they need presently or in the future.

SAVE MONEY AND SAVE EARLY

Build your own startup capital. You need your own resources to start your ventures without the need for external capital. Starting early requires some planning. For example, start saving before you take the leap from full-time employment. Budgeting wisely paves the way towards good financial management while you're building your business.

THINK LIKE AN INVESTOR

As examined in *The Outsiders: Eight Unconventional CEOs and Their Radically Rational Blueprint for Success*, written by William N. Thorndike, savvy business owners think like investors and pay close attention to how they must raise and allocate capital over the lifetime of their business.

For example, smart investors know that they may need to write more than one cheque to properly fund a successful business.

Build up your own capital, invest a little, then reserve some for follow-on investment in your own venture. Having capital set aside means you can continue to invest in your venture and leverage your own capital into additional financing from external sources later on, if your business needs it. Being able to approach investors and financiers with the opportunity to co-invest alongside you, the founder, is a far more compelling and attractive story. In [Integrated Investing: Impact Investing with Head, Heart, Body, and Soul](#), I devoted a chapter to the mindsets that help people think like investors.

LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF FINANCE

Get comfortable with numbers, accounting, and financial terms. From return on investment and internal rate of return to dilution and cap tables, learn what these terms mean and why they are important. Know the difference between burn rate and run rate. Know your debits from your credits and understand the different information that is told by your balance sheet, income statement, and cashflow.

There was a saying (when I was an investment banker): she who owns the financial model, owns the deal. This was to say, understanding the numbers was paramount.

IT DOESN'T HURT TO UNDERSTAND A BIT OF LEGALESE

In addition to understanding numbers, I have always found understanding the legal documents associated with funding to

be an advantage in negotiations. Whereas financial models tell the story of an investment opportunity in numbers, legal documents tell the story in legalese. I'm able to give anyone an overview of the legal documents they are about to enter into. I add a caveat that I'm not a lawyer and encourage people to get legal advice. I encourage people to have legal documents independently reviewed by a lawyer, but that doesn't absolve me from understanding, in general terms, what is in the documents. The number of times I've encountered entrepreneurs who have no idea what's in their documents is too frequent to count and it's scary.

UNDERSTAND WHAT "EXIT" MEANS AND HAVE A STRATEGY

Exit is most frequently talked about from the perspective of investors and it is the time and way we can realize our return on investment. Exit is when an investment opportunity is ready to be passed on to another investor. Entrepreneurs may or may not exit at the same time as investors. Research how other ventures and investors have realized exits. Get versed on mergers and acquisitions activity in your sector and develop a credible exit strategy.

BE YOUR BEST, MOST INFORMED SELF AND TRUST THAT THERE ARE ALIGNED INVESTORS OUT THERE

Be informed and be yourself. Seek out investors who are aligned with your vision, who will champion you, mentor you, and be a partner in your venture. The need to conform to a

particular pattern familiar to some investors is becoming less and less prevalent. The investor community is becoming more diverse and therefore the goal of attracting funding is becoming about fit, complement, and alignment.

It's an exciting time to be an entrepreneur. Build your network, find your community, and be informed, so that you can continue to build exciting, impactful businesses. Be the best investor in your own business and be a magnet for success.



Bonnie Foley-Wong

Bonnie is the founder of Pique Ventures, and the founding investor in Pique Fund. She's also the author of Integrated Investing, an amazing (and interesting! we promise!) book on impact investing, which Admin Slayer was thrilled to support at its launch. Bonnie has been mobilizing capital for entrepreneurial businesses for 20 years, having financed over \$1 billion of alternative investments in Europe and North America. She's an accountant, a former real estate investment banker and former corporate finance advisor, and a complete math nerd. Bonnie is smart, funny, has great taste in shoes, and knows what the heck she's talking about.

THE FUNDING LANDSCAPE

Identifying the Right Pieces of Your Funding Puzzle

By Jill Earthy

The funding landscape in Canada is shifting. New models are being created to increase transparency and accessibility, resulting in increased diversity and inclusion. As you grow your business, it is important to assess all the types of funding available to determine the right fit.

In other words, what are the pieces of your funding puzzle, and how do they link together? Explore the differences between debt and equity offerings, traditional and new means of financing.

Funding is not one size fits all, nor one way only, as many options fit together nicely.

Your decision will be based on your business model, stage of growth, and amount of funding you need. Some businesses are not eligible for debt financing as they are too early stage (without established traction) or do not have any assets to put against a loan as collateral.

Some businesses may be eligible for a small portion of debt financing, and need to raise additional funding through investors, to achieve the full amount of funding needed. Other

companies are in fast growth mode and want to bring on strategic investors, perhaps combined with some smaller investors.

First, it is important to understand why you are raising money.

How do you plan to spend the funds over the next 12 months and how will this money move your business forward? Outline a budget and identify key milestones you want to achieve.

Second, think about the types of investors you want to engage. Some entrepreneurs love the idea of engaging a broad range of investors: some strategic investors who will bring specific expertise and networks combined with a community of smaller investors who truly believe in their product or service, or may even be customers. Other entrepreneurs are overwhelmed by the prospect of managing many investors. Others like the idea of having 5-6 larger investors who sit on their Board of Directors and hold them accountable.

Bringing investors on board can be a bit like dating.

You want to ensure you have values aligned with each investor, and that they share your vision of your business. Strategic investors can also stretch your thinking, and push you further. You need to be ready and willing to participate.

However, at the end of the day, it is your business and you want to remain in control.

This is also important to consider when you are determining how much equity to give up in exchange for funding and expertise. Map out a plan based on the information you currently have and your plans for the future. It is important to plan for subsequent rounds of funding in advance.

Placing a value on your business is also a challenge. The value you, as a founder or entrepreneur, put on your business may be different from an investor. An investor is not concerned with how much blood, sweat and tears you have put into the business. They are more interested in the outcomes and where the business is going.

YOUR BUSINESS IS ONLY WORTH WHAT SOMEONE IS WILLING TO PAY FOR IT

Establishing a reasonable valuation of your company is a subjective process, and it is important that you speak to many

different advisors and mentors before agreeing to any terms. It has to feel right.

Yes, you will be giving up some equity in your business but ideally it is for the good of the company, and should feel good. You do not want to give up too much equity early on. Weigh the pros and cons of each offer, and know that it is ok to walk away.

Consider the ongoing responsibilities of having investors, versus just the benefits of having the money.

Investors will hold you accountable, and rightly so. They have trusted you with their money and expect you to use it wisely to grow your business, ultimately with a return. Regular and proactive communication with investors, whether you have one or many, is critical. Prepare to send monthly, or at least quarterly, updates on your progress as your business evolves.

One of the new shifts is the desire for more Canadians to invest in companies they believe in, and that are having a positive impact on the world. An investor wants to know where his/her money is going and how it will be used. As a result, a new group of investors is emerging. A group that has been traditionally under-represented in investor circles. This group consists of millennials, and more women.

This shift is also resulting in investors understanding that in order for positive change to happen, it may take a bit longer to realize a return and the return may be slightly smaller.

The result is the building of more sustainable businesses versus the elusive unicorns we hear about in the news (high, fast growth but also a higher chance of failure). More capital is being unlocked across Canada and being invested in meaningful, sustainable businesses, benefiting all.

There are many financing options available for businesses of all stages in Canada, and there are now new more efficient methods to access the right mix of financing for your business, including through online platforms.

CONCLUSION

Understand your reasons for fundraising, and then be sure to consider all of your options. You are the key to your business success, and you want to ensure you are bringing the right people and resources along with you.



Jill Earthy

Jill is the person you want to know if you're running a business in Canada, and we aren't even a little bit kidding. She's the Chief Growth Officer of [FrontFundr](#), a technology-based bridge between investors and entrepreneurs. Jill has built two companies, grew them nationally, and then sold them. She went on to lead two non-profit organizations that support entrepreneurs with financing, mentorship, and education. Jill is not only killing it at FrontFundr, but also serves on the Board of Governors for Simon Fraser University and the Board of the [Women's Enterprise Center](#), and is the Co-Founder of the [WEB Alliance](#). She recently co-founded [The RAISE Collective](#), to engage more women to invest in early stage companies. She's won countless awards and distinctions, and she continues to help businesses become successful. To say that we have a crush on Jill is to put it mildly. We know exactly who we want to be if we grow up.

FINANCIAL TOOLS AND APPS

From the Admin Slayer blog

Managing your money is an integral piece of business success, and personal success. With the right tools and the right support, you'll be amazed how easy it is to keep your finances humming along.

[QUICKBOOKS ONLINE \(@QUICKBOOKSCA\)](#)

BOOKKEEPING / INVOICING

A full-fledged bookkeeping system, QuickBooks Online is a favourite of small businesses and bookkeepers. Anywhere you have an internet connection, you, your bookkeeper and your accountant can all access your file.

You may want some help with the setup, but once up and running, you will wonder how you lived without those management reports happily greeting you each time you open it.

Many how-to tutorials are available online, and support has proven to be very responsive. Timesaving features include accepting invoice payments directly by credit card/e-transfer, automatic downloading and categorizing bank and credit card transactions and integrations with Hubdoc (more on that next).

[HUBDOC \(@HUBDOC\)](#)

RECEIPT MANAGEMENT

If you're tired of data entry or never knowing where you put your receipts and bills, Hubdoc is your answer. Hubdoc is a cloud-based repository for keeping your bills and statements in one secure central location. A simple picture taken of your receipt then emailed to your Hubdoc account, and that little piece of paper is no longer your concern. You can set it up to automatically download your bank and credit card statements; plus, all this can be easily shared with your bookkeeper and accountant (they love that!). Not only does it keep your documents all in one place, but it can also read your receipts, bills and invoices so the data can be exported seamlessly into your accounting program, such as QuickBooks. Hubdoc is [free to try](#) for 14 days.

[WAVE \(@WAVEHQ\)](#)

BOOKKEEPING / INVOICING

A relatively new player in the market, Wave is positioning itself as a viable alternative for entrepreneurs and small businesses looking for a feature-rich bookkeeping app at an excellent price (free). The software can be used for accounting,

invoicing, lending, payments, payroll, and receipts and is easy to use with an intuitive interface, receipt scanning, and the ability to handle multi-currency, hundreds of international bank connections, and regional sales tax/VAT.

SQUARE (@SQUARECANADA)

MOBILE POS

If you tend to meet your customers and collect payments in person, Square might be for you. An easy-to-use mobile point-of-sale tool with a variety of [affordable price points](#), Square allows you to carry out invoicing, next-day deposits, and inventory management while on the go. Square comes with an export function for your sales data should you need to download it to Excel. With the Square Reader, you can accept payments anywhere on your smartphone or tablet easily and securely (card information is encrypted as soon as it is swiped). Working with an iPad? No problem! The [POS Stand](#) with built-in credit card scanning allows you to professionally display an iPad either on your countertop or while you're out and about, making paying on-site easy and seamless for your customers. All you need is the Square Point of Sale software installed and you're good to go.

PAYWORKS (@PAYWORKSINC)

PAYROLL

When it comes to small businesses, Payworks is an attractive and affordable solution for payroll needs. It has a user-friendly

interface and is designed to meet both simple and complex payroll demands. Not many people enjoy doing payroll, so why not leave it to the experts? Payworks will prepare and file T4s, remit source deductions to the CRA and do WCB remittances. From first-hand experience, we've found their support to be timely and helpful. Beyond the basics, Payworks can also provide scheduling, absence management and an HR module. Curious about cost? You can receive a product quote tailored to your specific business size and payroll frequency quickly and easily in just a few clicks [online](#).

MINT.COM (@MINT)

PERSONAL BUDGETING

A handy free app for viewing all your accounts at a glance, Mint allows you to easily view your net worth, create budgets, track expenses, and even check your credit score (if you're feeling brave!). The app alerts you if you're being charged fees, are over budget, or if something in your banking seems suspicious. Mint connects to all your bank and credit card accounts (Canadian and U.S.) and downloads the transactions, giving you the "big picture" of all your finances in one place. You'll appreciate having that tedious work done for you so you can start gaining insight into your spending habits. It has several built-in graphs to provide useful visuals on your finances. If you're the type that likes to customize, you have the freedom to add sub-categories, but for the main expense groups, you're stuck with what you're given.

[YNAB \(YOU NEED A BUDGET\) \(@YNAB\)](#)

PERSONAL BUDGETING

For those wanting more control over their budget, YNAB won't disappoint. While it's not free (\$50 a year with a 34 day free trial), this is a tool for the hands-on person who will appreciate the ability to "give every dollar a job", create a personalized budget and see real cash flow. The software connects to your banks and credit cards for reconciling the purchases you have entered. YNAB can show you whether that purchase fits into the budget you've made, and if not, helps you reallocate

budgeted amounts between categories. If you're currently using a spreadsheet, give this a try instead. The software comes complete with helpful videos, podcasts, free online workshops, guides, and weekly newsletters that will help keep you on track and accountable to your financial goals, whether personal or business.

Have questions about choosing the right tools for you? [Ask us!](#)

Better yet, want to hand off your bookkeeping and never look at it again? Try out our [bookkeeping services](#) - you'll never look back!

YOUR BOOKKEEPING TEAM

From the Admin Slayer blog

You and your bookkeeper have a symbiotic relationship. You create the numbers, the bookkeeper sorts and manages them.

A great bookkeeper just wants to make your finances a thing of beauty, and you just want to spend your time focusing on what really matters: growing your business.

Your accountant wants a clean set of books delivered to them on time, and in order, so they can prepare your tax returns efficiently. A great bookkeeper puts a smile on your accountant's face, and increases the likelihood of a reduction in your annual bill.

The best kind of bookkeeping relationship is one of mutual trust and agreed upon expectations. Especially that last one.

How to Build a Great Bookkeeping Relationship

COMMUNICATION

A great bookkeeper needs solid information in order to line your numbers up like good little soldiers, and have them march for your accountant. Don't leave them hanging - respond to questions, emails, and requests for documents as

soon as you can. Delays can cost you money in the time that it takes for a bookkeeper to continuously follow up, and to reopen your file again and again.

Your bookkeeper should respond to you in the same quick and helpful way.

RECEIPTS, RECEIPTS, RECEIPTS

We cannot stress this enough. Find a way to get every single receipt and statement to your bookkeeper (ask us! we have ideas!). Whether you scan them, save them in a shared Dropbox or Google drive, upload them to Hubdoc, or take pictures of them, find a way to get your bookkeeper easy access, as soon as possible.

Getting your receipts and statements in time helps your bookkeeper do their job on time, saving you money in the long run. When a receipt is received and verified, your bookkeeper can record the GST Input Tax Credit correctly, reducing the amount of tax you need to submit.

Not only does this reduce the amount you pay to the government and fill your bookkeeper with JOY, it also reduces the amount of time your accountant may have to spend

adjusting your “uncategorized income and expense” items at the end of your fiscal year.

DON'T MESS WITH THE SOFTWARE

It's so easy to just open up your account and start making changes. Why not? You own it, and it's your business. But you could be confusing your bookkeeper. If you just can't help yourself, drop your bookkeeper an email, letting them know what you've done so they aren't desperately trying to make sense of a software program that appears to have gone rogue.

The time spent figuring out what you've done - and fixing anything that was entered incorrectly - unfortunately costs you money as well. If you see that anything has gone sideways, just get in touch with your bookkeeper and ask for an explanation.

Get Started

Bookkeeping matters, and no matter how great the software is (some of it is pretty fantastic), you need a real human to get in there and make sure it's done right, on time, with minimal costs and headaches.



PART 4: CULTURE + HR

Caring For Your Crew

CONTENTS

Purpose Driven Companies	48
Culture: Why it Matters	50
Team Building and Personality Tests	53
Designing an Office for Productivity	58
Canadian Group Benefits	62
The Worker Classification Question.....	64
Parental and Maternity Leave Support	67
Leading Change	69

You've decided that your business needs more than just you.

There are parts of your business you either don't love doing, or simply don't have time to devote to anymore. What got you here won't necessarily get you there. You need more humans, humans with skills. You need to determine what stays on your plate and [what needs to be delegated](#).

This is where things get really tricky.

It was easy when it was just about you, what you needed, and what you wanted in each day. Now, you need to make significant changes.

Internally, it will be about changing what you do every day. You're likely moving from being a technical specialist to being a strategic generalist. Instead of doing that thing that you built your business on, you're starting to move away from it. More and more each day, you're becoming a leader.

Externally, it will be about hiring, developing the people on your team, communicating, understanding the complexity and technical aspects of human resource management, and creating culture. If you decide to just go at it - as many an entrepreneur, foot on the gas, is prone to do - without a

mindful, careful strategy, this could be the tipping point. The point where your business falls apart.

Leading humans, particularly through change, is ticklish business. Learning how to communicate with them in a way they can understand rather than a way that works for you, is tough stuff.

Remember that whether those humans you're leading are actual employees or whether they are contractors or strategic partners, you have a definite leadership role that you must not abdicate. Want to be successful? It's time to pay attention to your people.

PURPOSE DRIVEN COMPANIES

By Pam Schmidt

Right now, off the top of your head, could you write out or say what the vision and values are of your company? What the “why” or purpose of your company is?

If you can't remember your company's vision and values right now, in this moment...if it's framed and up on a wall and you have to go look at it...or if you have to search for the piece of paper or file, then you **don't** have a vision, values, or mission.

Having a clear purpose or vision is required if you want to have a strong company culture that can be sustained over time and as you grow. Without it, your company and your culture are being morphed and shaped without intention. **That's a problem.**

If you have employees who aren't a fit, it's because your purpose isn't clear, and isn't articulated (and likely isn't showing up in the decisions you make or your processes). This is creating a fuzzy culture. If you have clients who aren't a fit, it's for the same reason. You've got a culture by default versus a culture that is intentionally created.

Your purpose and values need to be your criteria for every decision you make, and all your processes need to reflect and embody them. When you actually talk about your purpose in

your conversations and meetings, and when it's reflected in everything you do, then everyone is clear.

Simon Sinek talks about [the celery test](#). If you aren't clear what your “why” is, then you'll buy celery, M&M's, ice cream, potato chips, and kale. If your “why” is health, then it's clear that you're only going to buy the celery and kale (and maybe some other veggies to make a green smoothie).

When your “why” is clear, articulated, and embedded, then people can either say “hell yeah” to it, or “hell no”. They will either get on or off your bus - employees and clients alike. When you have people coming into work only to get a paycheque, you've likely got people who are disengaged, unmotivated, and uninspired. Research shows that approximately 70% of people in the workplace are disengaged, and it's doubtful that you've escaped this statistic entirely.

If you aren't clear on your company's “why” and you're getting a washed out, wimpy version of “hell yeah” from your teams and the people you hire, then what do you think is keeping people there? They will leave if someone offers them more money, better benefits, and a genuine purpose.

Your culture will lack trust if people don't know or understand how decisions are being made. You'll have higher turnover and sick time because your employees don't feel connected to each other, the company, or the leadership.

Conversely, when people feel connected to the "why" of the company, they see it in action every day, and they are inspired by it, then a strong sense of loyalty is created. Another company that has a fuzzy "why" and offers one of your employees a job for more money will not be enticing.

So, what do you do? How do you change your fuzzy "why"? The answer is easy: get clear on your purpose and your values. The rest is the slow and challenging part: embed these in everything. Every policy and every procedure. Make every decision through a process that aligns with and supports the "why" and your values. These should be your lens, your filter, and your touchstone. All of your communication should connect to and reflect your purpose and values. When you deviate from your purpose, vision, and values, and if you make decisions that aren't aligned with them, that's when your culture will get fuzzy... trust erodes, people feel disconnected, and you

get high turnover. It's a terrible cycle for everyone involved. No one wants to turn up to work only for a paycheck. Humans are not wired that way. They need purpose and intention.

Your purpose and your values should not be aspirational. They should be inspirational. Your purpose should not change over time. It's the bedrock upon which your company is built. It's up to you as a leader to clearly articulate the "why" of your company, to communicate it, to role model it, to ensure your team experiences it when they interact with you, and to ensure they know how their work connects to it. It is your job as a leader to ensure that the people you hire and the clients you engage with are fully aligned with your company's "why" Without it, like any house with a weak foundation, your culture will eventually deteriorate and collapse.

TAKE ACTION: THOUGHTS FOR THE ROAD

What is motivating you as a leader? How connected are you to the company's purpose, vision, and values? How does your personal "why" align with the company's? Chew on this for a while and see what insights you get.



Pam Schmidt

Pam is a super cool facilitator and consultant who works with leaders and their teams. At Admin Slayer, we've been thrilled to have her facilitate each of our team retreats, and help our team create and engage with our vision, values, and strategy. With Pam's help, we've learned best practices in communications, we've connected more deeply with our team, and created a culture that we take pride in.

CULTURE: WHY IT MATTERS

And How HR Can Help

By Heidi Eaves

Culture is what you create every time you make a decision, communicate to your team, run a meeting, give someone feedback, design your office space, manage a project, hire, or fire. It's the total impact of how you make other people feel, how you act, what you reward, and what you say.

CULTURE IS AS CULTURE DOES

It's a pretty basic equation: Everything you do to and for your staff – good or bad, intentional or not, one time or repeatedly – it all adds up. Employees crave clarity, consistency, and fairness. If you earn a reputation for repeatedly berating your team or taking credit for their ideas, that is your real culture, no matter how many cool parties you throw or how much money you spend on your new designer office space. If you make promises you don't keep, conduct business in a shady way, or set rules you don't follow, all the Beer Fridays and stand up desks in the world aren't going to fix that.

Now, you might be wondering why culture matters in the first place. Why do you need to care about people, or understand and encourage them, if you're already paying them to come in every day to do their job?

ENGAGED EMPLOYEES WORK HARDER

Employees who care about your business and their work do a better job. They come up with new ideas, they care more about your customers and clients, and they put skin in the game. **They save you money by being productive, excited, and honest.** They aren't away sick as often and they are more excited to put in the time to do things right. They tell their friends (as well as their social media "friends") how great it is to work at your company, so you don't have to spend as much energy or money on recruiting. They don't get upset and quit, then seek legal advice and post a bad review.

Aside from this, engaged employees who thrive in your office culture feel like they belong, and they are generally happier. They go home happier, and they go out into the world happier - isn't that a great result too?

EVERY COMPANY'S CULTURE CAN BE DIFFERENT – IT JUST HAS TO BE HONEST AND HEALTHY

If you do what you say, care about your staff's results, and share your vision for your company, you are certainly on the right path. If you support a culture of trust, your employees will trust

you back. They'll tell you where things can improve, and they will help you build something amazing. You'll know your culture is a healthy one when your employees are your best idea generators, your loudest cheering section, and your most valuable recruiting and marketing ambassadors. When they forgive you for mistakes and they have your back. When they want to learn and grow with you. When they are able to ride the waves of success and failure that are part of any growing business. There are as many company cultures as there are leaders – just be honest with yourself and your team about what you want to create, and keep an eye on your employees and clients to gauge your success.

How can an HR professional support you in your quest for engagement? The right HR partner can help you create an effective, positive, sustainable, and productive experience for your employees. They can work with you to define the culture you want to build, and design programs to help you achieve it. A successful HR partner needs to be agile, trustworthy, business-minded, fiscally responsible, and aware of the legal and process-driven aspects of the profession. They need to be able to articulate business needs to employees, and link employee needs back to the business. They need to move easily between strategy and action, and bring the right balance of communication, engagement, best practices, culture, kindness, legal requirements, business, and heart.

For example, employees value feedback, and many companies struggle to provide it. Your team wants to know what's expected, how they're being measured, and where they stand. They want to understand how to get ahead, and they want you to explain what that path looks like. An effective HR partner can help you define your culture and decide which skills and behaviours you will reward in support of that culture and your business goals. They can craft programs to identify your employees' strengths and skills, and design training, mentoring, feedback, and opportunities to grow skills and experience in order to meet those goals and close any gaps. They can coach your leaders to be comfortable providing feedback and having difficult conversations, and ensure that your employees receive meaningful and consistent support while they're with your company.

Want to build an engaging workplace culture? Here are some tips to get started:

1. DEFINE WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

How do you want customers or clients to think of your business? How do you want employees to behave and feel at work? How do you want to be seen as a leader?

2. ASK HOW YOU'RE DOING

Check in with customers, clients, and employees to see how you stack up against your goals from Tip 1.

3. FIND SYSTEMS THAT WORK FOR YOU

Create ways to continuously check in, communicate, and measure your culture, goals, and progress across your business.

4. ASK FOR HELP

Are there people in your business who are skilled at creating great employee experience and building sustainable systems? Task them with helping you define, set, and manage your culture. Need outside help? Reach out to trusted consultants, companies, and experts who can help you pave the way.



Heidi Eaves

Heidi is a Principal at [Project House Business Solutions](#), a Vancouver strategy and consulting company that helps leaders treat people better, grow their businesses better, and align their brand and culture. A senior Human Resources professional and people manager with over 20 years in tech and across a variety of industries, Heidi is passionate about guiding leaders to management + employee experience best practices. She is skilled at fostering rewarding + productive environments and creating opportunities for employee engagement. We consider Project House our sister-from-another-mister, with a raison d'être that matches ours. We like them so much we let Heidi write her own biography.

TEAM BUILDING AND PERSONALITY TESTS

By Fred Feistmann

You've been in business for a while. In the first few years, you did everything that was required to make your business run - because you had to, and the money wasn't there to hire any help. But now, you're starting to look outside of yourself.

You got into your business because you love what you do, and you create value for others while you do it, value that they recognize and for which they compensate you. Now that your business is starting to get its legs, you may be overwhelmed. You may be overwhelmed because the tasks you're completing are outside of your wheelhouse, or perhaps - in an almost best case/worst case scenario - there is so much opportunity and you just can't turn it away. Some business owners can actually become so 'successful' that they are struggling to deliver.

That's where team comes in.

Think back to when you were "client naked" - you didn't have operations to maintain, systems to implement, or projects to execute. Back then, you only had to put forward those things that made you unique, and this ultimately created the value your customers are now willing to purchase. Fast forward a few years to today, you're working on parts of your business you

hadn't considered, or didn't realize would be quite so monstrous. You have greater responsibilities, and more promises to execute and deliver on. Coming to this point in your business means, in some ways, a rebirth. It's time to take stock of all the activities that are required to keep your business growing in the direction that you want, to identify the things you love doing, and to take those with you to the next version of you and your business.

START WITH THE GOOD STUFF

Think about all the work that you do in your business that makes you feel fantastic - the stuff that drives your creativity, and leaves you feeling energized. These are the activities that are staying with you. Then, consider all the things that sap your energy, and leave you feeling frustrated and overwhelmed. Those are the activities that you're leaving behind.²

WHAT MAKES A TEAM?

Now that you have your list, you're probably pretty excited to build your team. Before you start hiring, it's important to

² Admin Slayer's first ebook, [The Art of Delegation](#), has a worksheet on page 53 to help you with this.

remember that your goal is not to hire people who are just like you.

It's a common mistake because you will often feel a connection with someone who is like you. You'll want to hire someone you understand, who gets concepts the way you do, and who has a similar approach.

The problem with hiring yourself over and over again is that you'll have a bunch of people who want to do, and are great at doing, all the things on that list of activities you want to keep. They'll be terrible at all the stuff you wanted to pass on. You haven't created a team - you've magnified the problem you're trying to solve.

A QUICK EXERCISE

Take out a pen and piece of paper. Transfer your pen to your non-dominant hand.

Write your name.

How does that look? Probably not that great.

How did it feel to write that way? How much concentration did writing your name require, especially compared to how easily you write your name with your dominant hand?

Imagine you had to write with that non-dominant hand for an entire day. Imagine how you'd feel at the end of that day.

You'd probably be frustrated, and your ability to work on creative, intuitive tasks would be severely reduced.

Imagine now that you write all day with your dominant hand. Compare the speed, creativity, and energy against a day spent writing with your non-dominant hand.

It's important to remember that not only do you want to reduce those non-dominant activities in your own life, but that you also want to make sure you're not asking your team (existing or future) to do things that feel like writing with their non-dominant hand. Essentially, if you're left-handed, you'll want some right-handed people taking over those tasks that are frustrating and sap your creativity. Focus on getting everyone writing with their dominant hand, and watch the sparks fly.

INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT TESTS

Many organizations use assessment tests to help them find the right team members, and focus them on the kinds of work that will bring them, and the business, the greatest success.

There are really three kinds or styles of individual assessment tests. The most common are personality tests, which are more about what motivates the individual, their preferences, beliefs and attitudes. These are great for understanding yourself and the people you work with on a personal level, but they won't tell you about how they work.

After that, there are cognitive tests that help identify someone's skill set, processing speed, and working memory. Understanding your team member's processing speed can help you communicate with them, and adjust your expectations around the time they take to understand and implement concepts. This could easily indicate whether the job you've created is one that fits this person. You may have created a position that requires rapid-fire decision making, but have a deliberate thinker in that role. It helps to be aware if you are asking a person to do something they're simply not equipped to do in the best possible way.

The third type of assessment relates to a person's conative strengths and are focussed on how a person instinctively prefers to approach problems. For example, you could be someone who, when learning to swim, just jumps right in, choosing to sink or swim - a common attribute among entrepreneurs and business owners. Alternatively, you could be someone who would read all the books ahead of time, and then dip your toe in - just to see how the water feels, and then perhaps practice a few strokes in the shallow end, before heading out into the deep end. Everyone is somewhere on the spectrum. Neither approach is right or wrong, as the outcome is still achieved. Understanding how each of your team members prefers to operate and having them understand your preferences will help you prepare them, and yourself, for delegating and communicating effectively.

DELEGATION, RESPONSIBILITY & THE VALUE CREATION PYRAMID

Your team, ideally, will be made up of individuals to whom you can delegate not just tasks, but responsibilities. You'll likely start with giving them a roadmap - a process - for how you complete the activities that run your business successfully. That's "command and control" delegation, which definitely works for a while, but ultimately, you want a team that takes responsibility.

There's a significant difference between being accountable and being responsible. Accountability, to me, implies a person having to account for their actions. In certain team cultures that can be seen as finger-pointing, and the requirement that a team member defend him or herself against expectations. On our team, we like to say that we don't have a "defence budget." We don't waste time and energy on finger-pointing when something (inevitably) does not turn out the way we would have liked. The team members and the business can't move forward if everyone is focused on laying blame, and if everyone on the team has invested in their own "defence budget." Instead, we focus on learning from the mistakes made, and deciding together what we can do differently in the future to maximize our own effectiveness.

Responsibility, in contrast to accountability, means that the team member is responsive in their particular area. They have the ability to react, make changes, and make decisions - within

an agreed upon standard, of course - in order to create the successful outcome your entire team is driving towards. The team member has the autonomy and freedom to apply their creativity to ensure that success.

That ability to leap intuitively to the next best action creates incredible value, for the team members, and for the customers who ultimately experience and pay for that value. The gift of responsibility comes from you, the founder. If you're busy holding on to every decision, people tend not to make any decisions - because they don't want to be wrong. Of course, this means that sometimes, they will not make the same decision you would have and mistakes could be made. How you handle those mistakes, whether you choose to make it a learning moment, or a finger pointing moment, tells your team whether you've given them responsibility or accountability.

In a true team environment, everyone seeks to have responsibility, and has a hand in driving the creative process. Relationship excellence is the glue that brings individuals together and turns them into a collaborative team. Collaborative teams have the ability to be agile and adaptive, to create value individually, and spread it throughout your organization. Your team will add creativity to other team member's jobs, especially when they know that the activity they're adding is firmly in the wheelhouse of the person who has the skills and desire to carry it out.

We think of this as an endless Value Creation Pyramid. The base of that pyramid is readiness. You'll have a documented process, or checklist, to guide your team. It doesn't have to be the be-all-end-all (because that doesn't leave room for creativity) but it is a tool that everyone uses, a common language for your team to interact around, and one to which they can add their insight and creativity. Once your team has created that, all it takes is a trigger around a customer, client, or interaction where you can set those processes in motion. If everyone is clear on roles, responsibilities, and is engaged in their thing... then your Value Creation Pyramid that starts with readiness can build upward, endlessly creating value at every level of your business.

EFFICIENCY & EFFECTIVENESS

A lot of founders and entrepreneurs are highly focused on efficiencies: how to get more done in less time. Like [Frederick Taylor](#), who innovated industrial engineering and manufacturing with scientific management (and has left a great deal of controversy in his wake), these business owners focus on reducing large, complex tasks into bite-sized pieces, and careful steps, creating standardization.

The reductionist Taylor approach definitely works - to a point. It creates efficiency, but does not necessarily create effectiveness - the responsiveness, agility, and creativity that will drive your company from here to there and truly set the entrepreneur free. This can be a difficult mental hurdle for a

business looking to grow quickly. Efficiency is simply easier than effectiveness. It's easier to measure, easier to think about, and easier to implement.

Effectiveness requires ongoing work, increasing innovation, and...communication. Communication is the lubricant of a well-oiled team and yet, communication itself can seem inefficient. Meetings, phone calls, conversations - people, we have work to do! A Taylor-like leader may tell team members to simply, "Do your job, and the rest will work itself out."

Those interactions, which can seem time-wasting at first, allow your team members to build trust - with you and each other - to learn, to grow, and to take responsibility in the environment you create and support.

Your business grows as a direct byproduct of the team members you've invested in. Taking the time to talk to people about their work, and their ideas, or investing in their skill sets and new capabilities, or even taking a day or so away for team building exercises can just feel inefficient. That's because, in the short term, it is inefficient. There are money-making activities you could be doing right now. But over the longer term, these activities are investments that build a dynamic, growth-oriented team that is focused on taking responsibility, and growing your business into one that is innovative, creative, dynamic, and agile.

The key is making that investment in your team. The world is changing, more rapidly than ever before. Your customers, your industry, your country, and the entire globe, will be throwing new and different things at you and your team every single day. You want your business to be adaptable and engaged at every single level. You cannot be everywhere, in every single interaction, and there are some things you just can't plan for. You need to create a strong team environment, one that empowers your team members to maximize their value.

The result is not only fantastic for internal value creation, but also for the value you create externally. Your customers can hear over the phone, see on your website, and experience in person, a business that provides value at every level. They can tell the difference between a team member who is happy and engaged, and one that is wary of making the wrong move. Guess which one they want to work with?



Fred Feistmann

Fred is a veteran portfolio manager with more than 18 years at a leading Canadian financial institution. He's a student of leadership, a certified Kolbe™ consultant, and former working cowboy.

DESIGNING AN OFFICE FOR PRODUCTIVITY

By Crystal Roche

When it comes to outfitting a new office, or expanding or redesigning, most business owners are focused on the basics... how many desks and chairs do I need and how can I configure them to fit all our people? It's understandable – running a business is expensive, and rent is certainly a big line item in the budget. There is often a desire to make do with a smaller office or to outstay your current space, and to throw some Ikea desks together and cram everyone in and call it “an edgy open concept workspace.” The problem? Chances are your employees are going to feel crowded and distracted, and discomfort and distraction leads to a decline in productivity.

A well-designed and thoughtful workspace can increase employee productivity and engagement.

But what are the elements of an ideal workspace? Is there a perfect design or roadmap to follow? I wish I could say yes; however, there is no ‘one size fits all’ for any office – each work environment has its own unique aspects and drivers that can be harnessed to foster productivity and success. That being

said, there are some key elements that can serve as a starting point for any space.

LIGHTING

Lighting is critical to promoting a healthy and productive work environment. When designing or laying out your office space, consider the placement of offices and workstations in proximity to natural light. Workstations should be banked perpendicular to windows to allow light to penetrate as far into the office as possible and windowless offices or cubicles should ideally be avoided. Recent studies are demonstrating that people with access to natural daylight sleep better, are sick less, have improved moods, less stress and are more creative.

Light temperature and diffusion are critical. Try to select an energy-efficient LED fixture that offers a warm spectrum of light and an acceptable level of lumens at the work surface (you could consult a lighting designer or electrical engineer to determine what will work best for your space and desired outcome).

Controllability of lighting levels is key when it comes to creating different types of effective work environments. Staff who spend time working at computer screens can benefit from

dimming capability, while collaborative meeting spaces might be best made bright and airy.

AIR QUALITY + TEMPERATURE

We all know what it feels like when the temperature in the office gets too high... it can leave everyone feeling sluggish and unmotivated. The same goes for a space that has too little fresh oxygen or poor air circulation.

Older buildings tend to be the biggest culprits for this. The impact to your staff of poor air quality can be in lost productivity, but, more concerning, also in higher absenteeism due to illness.

It's important when looking for a space to ensure that the building systems are in good working order and that you will have control over your office air temperature. An ideal office is one in which there are multiple zones that allow for control over the temperature. While there isn't an ideal temperature that pleases everyone, most studies indicate that the optimum working temperature is approximately 22°C (71.5F). The key to keeping employees happy with the thermal conditions of their workspace is giving them some control over their environment, or providing them with the ability to move from one zone to another depending on how they feel or the type of work they are doing. While air quality issues are harder to resolve by retrofit, they are possible, and creative solutions can be found that can offer some improvement.

ACOUSTICS + PRIVACY

Distractions...they are the productivity killers of any office. There has been a significant increase in the popularity of open space office plans in recent years, with many companies going this route to increase collaboration and workflow among team members. The trouble is, while some workers may feel very energized in a noisy and busy environment, many employees find high volumes and constant interaction exhausting, distracting, and stressful. It's important to be mindful that some people find the ringing of phones, talking of co-workers, and the creaking of the door down the hall completely aggravating, and each one of these distractions may send them off course time and time again all day.

So how can you give everyone what they need and eliminate distractions? One solution is to organize people by workstyle instead of by department. Creating space for people who like quiet in an area well-insulated from noise, and seating those who crave more stimuli together in a more collaborative zone can certainly help to eliminate a lot of friction and keep people motivated and on task. Another solution is to do away with assigned desks altogether, and create activity zones within your office - zones for quiet work, zones for complete privacy, and zones for collaboration - then give people the ability to move from one to another based on the type of work they are doing or how they are feeling. If neither of these is an option, then consider giving people the flexibility to work from home

when they need to focus on tasks that require no interruption, investing in some noise-cancelling headphones for those who find noise difficult to manage, or designating a small meeting room for quiet work. And don't forget to WD-40 that creaking door!

FURNITURE COMFORT

Employees spend a huge part of their lives at work and they should feel comfortable and at ease. If a worker can't stand their office chair and dreads coming to work every day to sit in it for 8 hours, leaving with a headache and a sore back every night, how frequently will they call in sick compared to someone who is comfortable all day? While a limited budget is often given as an excuse for not being able to afford a comfortable chair, how much money will you spend on your business if absenteeism or turnover is high? There are many great furniture options on the market to suit any budget, so outfitting your staff with the right pieces they need to feel comfortable is possible. Remember, it's not one size fits all. Every individual is different so while one chair might be perfect for John, it might not be ideal for Sally. Look for options that are highly customizable, and ask the furniture reps to train your team on how to get the most out of your pieces.

BRANDING

Most people think of branding as adding your logo to the walls and decorating your office in company colours. While that

certainly is a great way to achieve a certain level of brand alignment, it's not going to lead to higher workplace engagement or productivity. What's most effective is to dive a bit deeper and focus on how your space interacts with people on an almost subconscious level. Because this true alignment is more a feeling than an aesthetic measurement, it can be the hardest element to achieve. Success starts with defining your culture and values, and then weaving aspects of this into your workspace. For some companies this can be as simple as adorning the walls with meaningful language that is specific or inspirational to that business – or perhaps it's the use of a mascot or a sense of humour throughout the space. For companies with deep-rooted values around sustainability and the environment, this can be demonstrated through clean and natural design materials, a robust paperless policy and a paper-free office, composting programs, and walls decorated with wisdom on the impact (or lack of impact) this group is having on the planet.

Decisions around meaningful brand alignment are very individual and unique to every company. Your best resource to help you define how best to reflect your culture in your space: **Your people.** Canvass your staff to find out what they think defines your company culture and brand: run a contest, host an afternoon brainstorming session, find creative ways to get your team involved. The more committed your team is to the process of defining how to represent your culture throughout

your office, the more deeply rooted and motivating the end result will be.

It can be daunting to undertake the design of an office space. If you are able to afford help, it is highly recommended. A good consultant can help you weigh the pros and cons of certain design elements and recommend how to get the most impact for your budget. The most important thing is to keep in

mind who you are designing the space for and what they need. By giving your employees a voice in the process, listening to their individual needs, and offering them more flexibility and control over their workspace, you will enable a more engaged and productive workforce.



Crystal Roche

Crystal is a Principal at Project House Business Solutions, just like Heidi Eaves, who told you how to build employee culture a few pages back. Crystal is an expert, creative project manager, with more than a decade managing and delivering high-level project management functions, ranging from marketing, to construction, to corporate events, and anything that needs creativity matched with function. She's also bold and brassy, which makes us like her even more.

CANADIAN GROUP BENEFITS

Change is in the Air

By Darcy Shea

As the Canadian landscape evolves, so too must Canadian businesses. What was once a breeding ground for large conglomerates now fosters locally-owned organizations and startups ready to take the country and their piece of the market by storm. Regardless of the varied businesses on the scene, the need to attract and retain employees remains universal.

Traditionally, this is where employee benefits come in. Companies can offer their employees group insurance: where employers and employees cost-share a health benefits plan, paying a monthly amount into a pool, then drawing money from it when needed. Employers benefit from tax breaks in providing coverage and employees have health insurance for themselves and their families. This helps employers attract and retain healthy employees - but how these plans are defined is changing, quickly.

THE FLEXIBLE SOLUTION - WHAT IS AN HCSA?

Health Care Spending Accounts, or HCSAs, are defined-contribution plans where a yearly allotment of money is provided to employees for health and dental expenses.

An HCSA covers a wide variety of medical expenses – in fact, any item that meets the requirements for the Medical Tax Credit is eligible for coverage through an HCSA, according to the Income Tax Act. The conditions for HCSA coverage are set by the CRA and can be found online. Employees claim expenses approved by the CRA with the Health Care Spending Account up to the amount allocated as set by the employer.

WHAT MAKES HCSAS DIFFERENT?

Traditional defined benefits plans are rated based on several things – the experience of the plan member's claims (i.e., what they used the plan for in the previous year), as well as their demographics. The more the plan is used, the higher the cost of the plan. Additionally, traditional plans usually offer coverage like life and disability insurance, which help plan members during large health events. Unfortunately, most insurers require a minimum number of lives to issue these lines of insurance. While life and disability insurance can be offered alongside an HCSA, HCSAs do not have a minimum number of lives. This allows them to do things traditional plans cannot. An HCSA isn't 'rated' at all – it's a set dollar amount. This makes them easy to budget for. Employers simply calculate how much will be set aside each year for their employees and make sure

they have that funding available. HCSAs are also free from some limitations traditional plans can have in that they don't partially cap services - employees determine where they use their allocated funds.

HOW DO COMPANIES BRIDGE THE OLD DAYS WITH NEW PRODUCTS?

It's as easy as painting by numbers - provide both. HCSAs can be auto-coordinated with a traditional benefits plan; they can automatically cover the cost of a deductible or coinsurance. For instance, if an employee has a 70% coinsurance on a \$100 drug with a traditional plan, they'd usually only have \$70 covered by their plan. If they auto-coordinate with their HCSA, the \$30 they would have to pay could come out of their HCSA.

Employers benefit from a combined plan as well; HCSAs are a great way to protect traditional plans from big increases in rates. If the plan members are using a large portion of the plan, the employer could decide to take that away and include

an HCSA instead, so the claims of those services don't affect their claims experience for the year.

When employers have a combined traditional plan and an HCSA, they have the value of being flexible while still having health insurance in place in case there is a large health event. According to [The Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey \(2017\)](#), "more members with health spending accounts believe their benefits plans meet their needs and are quality programs than those without."

TAKE HCSAS INTO ACCOUNT

The landscape of entrepreneurial Canada is a work of art in progress – it's ever-changing and covers a vast group of Canadians. The demographics of the business world are changing too; the need for flexibility is growing and the cost of benefits is rising. Health Care Spending Accounts are a tax-effective way to help soften those costs while providing flexibility for employees from every walk of life.



Darcy Shea

Darcy is a Regional Director at [Benefits By Design](#), which offers innovative group insurance products and services to help working Canadians. Their company culture is pretty impressive, and Darcy is an example of how great company cultures support great people. She's smart, curious, and genuinely interested in determining how she can help the people she works with. Darcy is such an active advocate that we suspect that she might end up in politics one day...

THE WORKER CLASSIFICATION QUESTION

More Relevant Than Ever

By Simon Kent

The general consensus is that the so-called “gig” economy is here to stay, and that it’s not just for startups or millennials anymore. In a gig economy, jobs are temporary and flexible rather than permanent and full-time; businesses hire workers as contractors or freelancers, rather than employees. This rise of the gig economy means that the tricky question for business owners of how to classify their workers – as independent contractors, employees, or somewhere in-between – is now more relevant than ever.

Below, we review why worker status matters and the pros and cons of classifying your workers one way or the other, before offering some “best practice” tips for those of you facing the worker classification conundrum.

EMPLOYEE VS. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR: WHY DOES IT MATTER?

A worker’s status is important for several reasons. Among other things, how you classify your workers affects:

- Whether they are entitled to notice or severance on dismissal.

- Their – and your – income tax obligations.
- Whether they – and you – are subject to Employment Standards laws relating to wages, hours of work, vacation, and overtime.
- Whether they are protected by human rights laws.
- Who must pay for their WorkSafeBC coverage.

Generally speaking, employees have access to a much wider array of work-related legal rights and protections than do their independent contractor counterparts. This is why the media is full of stories about gig workers filing lawsuits against companies such as Uber, Lyft, and GrubHub, claiming they are entitled to higher wages, overtime pay, vacation pay, and unemployment benefits (“employment insurance” in Canada).

Given the potential downside to employers if they misclassify their workers, why do many business owners continue to use the independent contractor label?

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS: WHAT’S THE ADVANTAGE?

If an employer can successfully establish a contractor relationship with its workers, there’s plenty of upside from a

financial perspective. Here are some of the costs and other obligations a business owner can avoid by creating a contractor workforce:

- Notice of termination / severance pay.
- Vacation, stat holiday, and overtime pay required by Employment Standards laws.
- Employer benefits such as medical, dental, and disability coverage.
- High overhead.
- WorkSafeBC premiums.
- Payroll deductions and remittances.

Of course, employers are not the only ones who benefit under a contractor model. Many workers prefer this arrangement because it offers various tax advantages (such as write-offs), as well as much greater freedom and autonomy when it comes to their work.

CREATING A CONTRACTOR RELATIONSHIP: BEST PRACTICE TIPS

If you've considered the financial risks – which include government-imposed penalties and fines – of worker misclassification and wish to forge ahead, there are ways to increase your chances of successfully arguing that your workers are indeed independent contractors. Here are some “best practice” tips for business owners – otherwise known as...

WORKER CLASSIFICATION DO'S AND DON'TS:

- Don't rely on labels. Many business owners believe – mistakenly – that calling a worker an independent contractor is enough to create a contractor relationship. In fact, neither the term nor your intentions are enough, legally speaking. Rather, what is important is the actual nature of the parties' relationship.
- Do require the worker to use their own “tools” or equipment, from their business cards, to their computer to their car.
- Do let your workers set their own hours.
- Don't impose uniformity on your workers in terms of what they wear or where they work.
- Do allow your contractors to subcontract or delegate their tasks and responsibilities to others.
- Do ensure that the worker bears both the risk of loss and opportunity for profit from their work.
- Do encourage the worker to work for other organizations.

Ultimately, there is no single test to determine whether a worker is an employee or independent contractor. However, if asked to make a decision about a particular worker's status, Canadian courts and government agencies will look at the total relationship of the parties and consider whether the worker is performing the services in question on his/her own account.

DEPENDENT CONTRACTORS: A FINAL CAUTION

There is a third category of workers that can further complicate the worker classification question: dependent contractors who, like employees, are entitled to notice or severance on dismissal (but not the other legal rights afforded to employees).

Even where a business owner “does all the right things” to create a true contractor relationship, a court may still conclude

that the worker is a dependent contractor. The deciding factor is the degree of exclusivity present in the working arrangement. A work relationship is exclusive if the employer does not allow an individual to work for other businesses. Where there is significant – or complete – exclusivity, this may lead a court to find that a dependent contractor relationship exists, thereby opening the employer up to unexpected financial liability.



Simon Kent

Simon is the founder of [Kent Employment Law](#), co-founder and partner at [Connect Family Law](#), and knows a thing or two about where law, business, and family meet. He’s an entrepreneurial lawyer who gets business, understands the struggles of business owners, and knows how to help teams succeed. Kent Employment Law was also the first [B Corp](#) law firm in Canada, which really demonstrates their commitment to social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency. They’re awfully nice lawyers.

PARENTAL AND MATERNITY LEAVE SUPPORT

From the Admin Slayer blog

As Canadians, we can be proud of the fact that we have both maternity and parental leave, supported by Employment Insurance. Through this program, new parents are entitled to time off work knowing that their employer must hold their position open for them.

For business owners, it can be a struggle to fill a position on a one year contract. Quality administrators, as we well know, are hard to find. Finding one who will knock your socks off and be totally satisfied with a one-year commitment is even harder.

For employees, transitioning out of and back into a full-time role can be trying - particularly the coming back part. The person who filled your position while you were away may not be equipped to train you - and may not be thrilled that you've returned. At the same time, you're juggling the responsibilities of a growing family, which often means a great deal of trial and error.

How Admin Slayer Can Help

During leave, Admin Slayer's team of experts will take on as much of the employee's work as possible, coordinating with your on-site staff to ensure a smooth transition both for your business and for your employee. On return, Admin Slayer will

assist your employee in transitioning back to full-time, getting them up to date on changes, systems, and filling gaps when the unexpected arises.

POSITIONS & TASKS

- Executive / Personal assistant
- Bookkeeping
- Scheduling & calendar management
- Website updates
- Social media management
- Document creation & management
- Client & staff communications
- Spreadsheets
- Procedure documentation
- Email management
- Expense reports
- PowerPoint presentations
- Writing (blogs, articles, etc.)
- Telephone answering (if your system allows for remote answer)

The only things we won't be able to help with are those things that require hands in your office - opening mail, receiving couriers, welcoming customers, and hand delivering items.

At Admin Slayer, we're thrilled to be able to solve a problem for employers and help new parents achieve success. [Contact us](#) to get the conversation started.



LEADING CHANGE

By Pam Schmidt

I am often asked by leaders to help their team to deal with a change that is being implemented. They want their team members to “get on board” and be “more resilient” with change. **This drives me crazy.**

When leaders aren't personally impacted by the change (their jobs, scope of their work, etc.) and they've been involved in discussions and planning it for months, there seems to be an expectation that employees accept the change and get on board quickly. Why wouldn't they? Logically, the change makes financial sense. It makes sense for what's happening in your industry, and for moving forward in the best way possible.

But have you created a compelling story for the change?

Too often, the change isn't connected clearly enough (or at all) to the WHY or vision of the company. There is no heart in the way the change is being communicated. Or it gets communicated once face to face, and worse, updates only get communicated by email.

And then leaders get frustrated that employees aren't getting on board or getting on board fast enough.

It is a leadership competency to LEAD change. It is different than managing change – the process of getting from A to B. Leading change is leading your employees - your people - through the psychological and emotional transition of going from A to B.

It involves communicating over and over and over and over, and over again, linking it to the WHY (your company's compelling story of why you do what you do) and then allowing people to share and express their hopes, as well as their concerns and fears.

Not once. Not twice. *A lot.*

It requires you as a leader to engage employees in the change as much as possible. Ask them: how is this change positive? How is it not? Engaging them where they have the ability for input or influence. Let them know how, and provide opportunities to actually become involved. Because we all know that when we feel like we have a stake in the game, we are more committed.

There are lots of tools and formulas for managing change, but leading it requires you as a leader to be IN IT with your team, your people, your employees. You need to sit with them in

their discomfort, their dislikes, worries, and fears about the change. This might be difficult and uncomfortable for you. Sorry, but this is part of your job.

There is no other way if you want to do it well, do it right, do it with humanity. And the only way for you as a leader to get comfortable with discomfort is to actually do things that make you uncomfortable. There is no cross training for this. Same for resiliency.

The only thing that builds resiliency is by going through something difficult and coming out the other side.

You need to model this for your employees. They need to know the “why,” the purpose of the change, and clearly see how it connects to the “why” of the company. (If you can’t connect it, that’s a whole other problem.) They need to see your vulnerability and humanity through the process.

They need to see and experience that you are willing to listen, and be in it with them through the emotional, psychological part of the change. As a leader, you then have to work to address those concerns. [According to McKinsey](#), two of the reasons change efforts fail is because of employee resistance and management’s behaviour not supporting the change. As a leader, you also have to count yourself in as someone who needs to change.

Ultimately, if you want people to act like adults, you have to treat them like adults. This doesn’t mean that they need to ‘suck it up.’ You wouldn’t respond that way if your best friend was going through a change that was impacting them. You would listen. You would empathize. You would let them talk about it. You’d help them to find their way through it.

This is all that your employees want from you, too.



Pam Schmidt

Pam is a super cool facilitator and consultant who works with leaders and their teams. At Admin Slayer, we’ve been thrilled to have her facilitate each of our team retreats, and help our team create and engage with our vision, values and strategy. With Pam’s help, we’ve learned best practices in communications, we’ve connected more deeply with our team, and created a culture that we take pride in.

PART 5: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT + SELF-CARE

CONTENTS

Burnout and Stress Management	73
How Hungry are YOU for the WIN?	76
Busy Life Mindfully	79
Calm the @\$% Down	82
4 Easy and Affordable Self-Care Services	85
ADD and Entrepreneurship	86
Entrepreneurs and Relationships	91
Sexuality, Creativity, and Your Business	95
Entrepreneurial Leadership and Conflict Management.....	97



Now that you know everything (!) about taking care of those amazing people on your team, it's time to stop and take a look at you. Yep, you. Get over here.

You may not "have time" to worry about self-preservation. You are FINE. Yes, yes, yes, there's that thing you were going to do, and you know that you're supposed to have vacations and rest days and what not, but honestly, you're happier working. This is your sweet spot. You're different.

Aw. That's adorable.

No, you're not. Don't waste your time arguing.

We're genuinely dedicated to your success. Why? Because without your success, we are not successful. Admin Slayer has a symbiotic relationship with you and your business. If you're not okay, we're not okay (and vice versa). We're heavily invested in you being okay.

If you get sick, you won't be okay. If you're too stressed out to think, you won't be okay. If you forgot that you have muscles, you know what? They go away. Guess what happens then? You won't be okay.

What happens when you're not okay? Your business is not okay. Your personal life (hahaahahahaaaaaa...) is not okay. Everything. Falls. Apart. We can't be having that.

Yes, you are an actual superhero.

Yes, you can manage more and do more than most people. YES, you are some kind of special. It's why we like you. We'd also like you alive - and healthy. Just stop and have a read through this chapter, and start taking care of you.



BURNOUT AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

By Dr. Seema Kanwal

What does burnout look like?

It isn't a sudden shift, like food poisoning from that poor decision you made last night. It creeps up on you over time, because it took time to create. Sadly, it also takes time to return from it and, as a business owner, the last thing you have is time.

The signs that bring many business owners to my door, seeking medical assistance, include:

- Chronic fatigue, low energy, and exhaustion
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal distress
- Lowered immune system and increased illness
- Loss of appetite, weight gain or loss
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Reduced enjoyment in life (not exactly the same as depression)
- Increased irritability
- Forgetfulness and impaired concentration, foggy head, or reduced clarity of thought

The entrepreneurs I see are so driven, and so self-motivated, that they've managed to keep the fires burning despite the fact that often, they've run out of fuel. Rest and downtime are nearly nonexistent, and they often feel an overwhelming sense of guilt if they do try to take it.

On a cellular level, I'll see it in the lab work that I review. Often the business owner will feel confident that the blood work will come back without any signs - they'll be "fine." They're certain it's simply age catching up with them.

Yet, when the results come in, particularly in markers such as c-reactive protein, homocysteine, CBC (complete blood count), and hemoglobin particularly part of a CBC panel, their body is screaming: I am under high levels of stress!

Physiologically, they may not be getting enough oxygen to the brain. Their bodies may be overwhelmed with inflammation, which can increase their risk of a heart attack. They may have nutritional deficiencies, and dangerously low immune response.

Coming back from burnout and chronic stress, which does require time and effort, does not mean that you have to walk away from all the responsibilities in your life, and destroy the

business you've built. Instead, you can begin to change your cells on a mitochondrial level with small, incremental changes that add up to increased health and vitality.

I teach my patients about creating boundaries in their life, to allow the stress to dissipate, and increase their ability to actively engage in and enjoy their lives. Here are just a few that can create massive change for you.

RELEASE PHYSICALLY

Finishing your work day just one hour earlier can make a huge difference, especially if you can get to the gym, the tennis court, or yoga class. There's something for everyone - it doesn't have to be yoga if that's just not your thing - but find an outlet where you can physically release. Entrepreneurs especially need to find a way to let go of the stress that has been built up throughout the day. Even if you have to go back to work that evening, as so many of us do, taking the time to definitively break from your regular stress can allow you to go back with a clear head. You'll be more focused, and be able to get more done in just an hour than you would have in several, if you hadn't taken that time to clear your head.

RELEASE MENTALLY

Find a friend who might go for a walk with you, maybe once a week, or every other week. We all need to talk with someone we trust, who cares for us, and release that mental pressure as

well. Make it a permanent date, where you both have carved out the time to really take care of each other. If you don't have a friend who can fulfill this role, a therapist or counsellor can easily assist with this part in your life, allowing you to let go of your mental and emotional pressures.

EAT REGULARLY

Do you find yourself skipping lunches because you just don't have time to eat? You're not alone. Preparing food can be one more thing you don't have time to do before you head out in the morning. Consider spending one night in the week just cutting up veggies and putting them in mason jars or other containers in the fridge, so that you can quickly grab it on your way out the door each day. Keep nuts and seeds in your car, in your desk drawer, in your pocket or purse, so you always have access to those healthier fats that feed your brain to do what it does best. It doesn't have to be fancy - it just has to be good, nourishing food.

GET YOUR FAT

We all want to be mindful of the fats we eat. Depending on our genetics, we may need more or less fats to be physically healthy. Many people are afraid of eating any fats at all, thanks to the low-fat epidemic that started in the 1950s, which led to increased strokes and heart attacks throughout North America. The healthy fat amount you require is really dependent upon your own body. If you're living on a very low-fat diet, a small

increase can positively affect your insulin levels and reduce sugar cravings.

Your brain - often the organ that works the hardest for business leaders - is 90% fat. It needs both fat and carbs in order to operate effectively. Good fats, like those in cashews, pecans, walnuts, etc., can help lift the fog from your brain, and keep you feeling satiated throughout the day.

LOWER YOUR CAFFEINE INTAKE

We all love our caffeine, and this may seem wild but... try to limit it to just one cup a day. If you're a heavy user, take your time in reducing this, as you don't want headaches on top of everything else. Have water near you all the time, and try decaf tea (counts as water intake!). Spice up your water with lemon juice, or cayenne pepper - whatever will make it easier for you to drink UP.

Why? Caffeine is a direct adrenal gland stimulus, which affects your gut, and your brain. If your brain is constantly "on"

because it's being stimulated with caffeine, when does it have time to shut down, and to process? Over the long term, high levels of caffeine intake can trigger the pancreatic secretion of insulin, which has to go somewhere in your body. For many women who see increased fat on their waistline, despite a healthy diet and exercise (business leaders are often incredibly diligent about this), extensive use of caffeine can actually be the culprit.

While it can take anywhere from 1 to 5 years to create, you'll be happy to know that only 3 months can turn this around, provided you're not diabetic.

TAKE ONE DAY

Just one. One day a month, just for you. No appointments, no phone, no email. No work around the house. No parenting. No [emotional labour](#). Make that day strictly about you. You will feel a lot better for it.



Dr. Seema Kanwal

Dr. Kanwal is a Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine and a graduate of SFU's Chemistry & Biochemistry program. She is one of the few naturopathic doctors in British Columbia to hold pharmaceutical prescription rights, and one of the few in Canada to be trained in the Apo E Diet. She focuses on disease prevention, and on working with individuals who have rare genetic disorders as well as those who suffer from stress related conditions. At Admin Slayer, we like her terrifyingly forthright approach and complete lack of "woo woo."

HOW HUNGRY ARE YOU FOR THE WIN?

By Charlene SanJenko

Athletes undergo rigorous training, dialed-in nutrition, mental preparation, quality supplementation, consistent bodywork, adequate hydration, rest, and recuperation to ensure they bring ALL of themselves at their optimal performance to each and every game. Over and over again, day after day, week after week, their regime yields results.

Success, traction, fruition, and top-notch delivery are the name of this game, and athletes understand their success and sustainability are directly related to their consistent Practice (regime) to unleash their fullest potential.

- Where is the parallel in business? In leadership?
- Who are our shining examples of Leader Athletes?
- Who is bringing their ABSOLUTE BEST to the game of entrepreneurship, innovation in business, and social impact?

A comparison to Leader Athletes holds the key to the results and resilience we're all after. The question is: How Hungry are YOU for the Win?

RIGOROUS TRAINING

You may wonder how rigorous training applies to you as a leader - not professional training - physical training. Regular physical exercise makes you a more resilient leader. The

discipline to get up daily and self-inflict a challenge that causes you to dig deep to complete it prepares you to be on the top of your game for the rest of your day.

Let's face it, being a leader is tough. It starts with owning it. It's not for the faint of heart. Start each day with a [Warrior Workout](#), feeling strong and confident in your body and your life. It'll carry through the rest of your day.

DIALED-IN NUTRITION

It boils down to this: ENERGY IN = ENERGY OUT. If you are fuelling yourself with quality fuel, your energy, performance, clarity, and aptitude will shine through in spades.

It amazes me how many professionals endeavour to rock a sales trip or land an important account heading into it with sub-quality fuel (or no fuel at all). If they are lucky, they pull it off, but it isn't sustainable. Exhaustion, illness, cravings, and even depression set in. You fall into the hamster wheel of always playing 'catch-up' (coffee to wake up, sugar to 'get' energy).

Leader Athletes train hard, eat well, and bring it ALL to the game. It's their Practice.

MENTAL PREP: VISUALIZATION, MINDFULNESS, AND PRESENCE

Our mind is completely inundated and obliterated on a daily basis with a never-ending stream of incoming messages, tough decisions, and challenging conversations.

The demands of what a leader is expected to know, do, manage, remember, and handle continue to escalate, yet most haven't adjusted their mental Practice to meet (and crush) these increasing demands.

Athletes know the value of mental training whether it is the power of visualization, the ability to focus through regular meditation, or finding their edge and leveraging their flow through the discipline of absolute presence.

QUALITY SUPPLEMENTATION

Supplements only make sense once you have your eating where it needs to be. It doesn't replace this important step; it 'supplements' it. For female Leader Athletes, three supplements that I would definitely speak to my healthcare professional about would be:

1. Iron. Have a read through this PowHERhouse article and video interview of [Dr. Seema Kanwal](#).
2. Protein.
3. Moringa.

Other valuable 'supplements' that I personally wouldn't live without:

1. Mentors.
2. Workout Accountability Buddies.
3. Naps.

CONSISTENT BODYWORK

Our body is our vehicle for this lifetime. If it shuts down, we shut down. Leaders often ignore their bodies until the point they are forced to send a warning signal – a heart attack, fatigue, digestive health challenges...

Athletes fully appreciate the value of their bodies in their careers, but do we? Prevention is preservation and preservation is power!

Various modalities optimize our health and body care from Naturopathic Health to Massage, Acupuncture to Reflexology. Don't wait until it becomes necessary for pain management. Be proactive with your body, energy, longevity, and performance.

HYDRATION

Did you know that if you are not properly hydrated, your body cannot effectively absorb the nutrients you are eating? Repeat after me: Nutrients are wasted without adequate water.

Athlete Leaders are hypersensitive to where else they may be leaking energy, spinning their wheels, and not fully getting the traction they so deserve.

Three areas come to mind:

- Follow-up
- Isolation, duplication, replication
- Over-talking and under-listening

RECUPERATION

Athletes value their rest and recuperation - the body's opportunity to repair and grow.

They understand recuperation is directly linked to their passion, sustainability, and longevity as a top performer. Self-care is a necessity, not a luxury. In a world that moves faster and faster each day, where decisions are complex and often contentious, where priorities endlessly stack up and fight for rank, Leader Athletes value the importance of leading from a grounded, positive, proactive, and creative place – a place that is nurtured through self-care.

Our best learning and greatest results will come when we stop holding our worlds apart. Integration is key. Lifestyle + Leadership, integrated.

[PowHERhouse](#) is always on standby as a real, relevant, and relatable media source, with solutions for a stronger body, business, and life for Leader Athletes.



Charlene SanJenko

Charlene is the CEO of [PowHERhouse](#), a cross-Canada social impact women's media organization, and a long-time friend of Admin Slayer. Through incredible events, education, mentorship, their magazine, television, and much more, Charlene supports and builds leaders. A former professional athlete, personal trainer, business owner, government leader, communications and events specialist, Charlene provides 360-degree support and opportunity for Canadian women with a desire to lead more powHERfully in their body, business, and life.

BUSY LIFE MINDFULLY

By Gail Howell-Jones

Why do increasing numbers of over-extended and busy professionals make it a priority to integrate mindfulness practices into their daily lives?

Michelle Obama, Jerry Seinfeld, Ellen DeGeneres, Jeff Weiner (LinkedIn CEO), Evan Williams (Twitter co-founder), Oprah, Sting all meditate daily.

Like you, they have little time - so do they know something you don't know?

Yes, they do.

Stress and rumination - also known as 'monkey mind' - taxes our ability to navigate multi-faceted modern life and reach our potential. Negotiating professional and personal goals can leave us scrambling until we burn out or cut and run. Dreams diminish. Bottom lines drop.

We think we can manage it all. But research strongly suggests that mental loads such as To Do lists rapidly consume our mental resources³. Every time you change focus from one thing to another, there is something called a "switch cost" - in effect

your mind stumbles a bit, and requires time to get back to where it was. For example, one study showed that it can take 15 minutes to completely refocus after checking an email. Yikes!

Less distraction and less anxiety equal a better bottom line. Clearing your mind leads to deeper more productive thinking.

Mark Zuckerberg is famous for having multiple sets of the exact same outfit to avoid cluttering his thoughts about Facebook with decisions on what to wear on any given day!

"SIT AND OBSERVE AND YOU WILL SEE HOW RESTLESS YOUR MIND IS." OVER TIME, "CALMING YOUR MIND PROVIDES ROOM TO HEAR MORE SUBTLE THINGS - THAT'S WHEN YOUR INTUITION STARTS TO BLOSSOM."

- Steve Jobs

³ Bar, M (2016) In Time Special Edition: Mindfulness

A study at the University of Wisconsin found that people who meditate regularly have different patterns of brain electricity. Mindfulness can induce neuroplastic changes in various areas of the brain, including areas related to the stress response⁴ and reduce autonomic arousal by increasing output in the vagus nerve activating the parasympathetic (calm down) system.

Unmanaged stress also affects aging at a cellular level by shortening the telomeres associated with longer life⁵. P. Kaliman found that mindfulness practice can diminish inflammation and other biological stresses that occur at the molecular level and diminish physical and mental capacity⁶. Meditation is thought to increase cognitive flexibility⁷ and moderate age-related cognitive decline⁸.

Meditation also reduces 'urge surfing' (not reacting to mental urges), negative affect states before they dominate thinking patterns and behaviour, and acts as an attentional anchor to manage ruminative unproductive thinking patterns.

⁴ Holzel et al (2011) Psychiatry Res. January 30, 191(1) 36-43

⁵ Saron C, 2010. Intensive meditation training, immune cell telomerase activity and psychological mediators. Psychoneuroendocrinology 36(5) 664-681

⁶ Kaliman, P et al (2014). Rapid changes in histone deacetylases and inflammatory gene expression in expert meditators. Psychoneuroendocrinology Vol. 40 96-107

⁷ Lee & Orsillo (2014) Investigating cognitive flexibility as a potential mechanism of mindfulness in Generalized anxiety Disorder. Journal of behaviour Therapy and experimental psychiatry 45 (1) 208-216

⁸ Gard, Hozel and Lazar (2014). The potential effects of meditation on age-related cognitive decline: a systematic review. Annals of the New York Academy of Science January 2014. Vol 1307 89-103

⁹ Jon Kabat-Zin 1994 Full Catastrophe Living

However formal meditation is not the only way to benefit from mindfulness. Mindfulness is simply defined as, "paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally"⁹. Similar benefits can be achieved through focused attention, mindfulness, or compassion and loving-kindness meditation. Each has a unique strategy and positive effect.

Anxiety is strongly correlated with poorer mental and physical performance and is often implicated in depression. Evidence also suggests that informal practices such as yoga, Tai Chi or playing a musical instrument may be as effective as formal mindfulness practice. A 2015 random controlled trial found that only 8 weeks of yoga significantly reduced anxiety in healthy women.

START SMALL. FIVE MINUTES A DAY.

- Start with something already part of your day, such as the first cup of coffee. Focus on that cup of coffee - the smell, the colour, the sensation of warmth, and then slowly take a

sip with all your attention. Engage with beginner's mind, as if you have never before experienced coffee. The trick is to be in that moment and no other. When attention wanders, gently turn your mind back to the coffee.

- Start with 5 minutes of slow, focused, longer outbreaths, or humming, as both activate the vagus nerve and reduce arousal.
- Start by sitting comfortably and for 1 minute each: breathe in for 4 and out for 6; allow your breath to fall into an easy rhythm, focus on breathing and imagine random thoughts of a leaf on a river and let them drift; relax and simply sit; think about something you are grateful for, then how you physically feel.

The evidence is here. Mindful time will benefit your health, relationships, and business. Common excuses such as, "I don't

have time or space, my mind is too busy, I have physical or emotional pain," are just self-defeating stories. Yes, you will likely struggle and resist. My own goal is 20 minutes twice a day. I don't always reach it. I can talk myself out of it. I frequently just want to think. I love thinking! But I now know my most creative thoughts come when my mind has a quiet time. So I resist my resistance.

If learning more about busy life mindfulness strategies and overcoming some of your challenges interests you, follow this link to my website for the next [Busy Life Mindfully workshop](#). I can promise you, the benefits will more than outweigh the time you invest. That's good business.

All the people mentioned are only a fraction of successful individuals who credit mindfulness practice for their stamina, energy and creative success. They do know something. And they act on it.



Dr. Gail Howell-Jones

Gail is a registered psychologist, transition coach, clinical supervisor, speaker, and author. She is masterful at supporting people through significant transitions, finding focus, peace, and that seemingly-fictitious "life/work balance." Gail also provides regular workshops that allow you to dip your toe into the worlds of mindfulness, intentional change, risk taking, and vision creation.

CALM THE @#% DOWN

By Julia Chung

Quite a few years back, when I realized I wasn't twenty-five anymore (that realization took time), I begrudgingly joined all those sweaty people doing fitness things.

I didn't literally join them, because yuck, but I definitely started doing somewhat sporty things as part of the long-term plan to live forever and not be sick. To that end, when I became annoyed about my lack of muscle growth, I started working with [Nikki Gallos](#), who gave some super unexpected advice: Take Breaks.

Not just "take breaks throughout the day sometime" but actually "work hard, then take a break, then work hard again." But, since I'm all about productivity, how about if I just work hard, work hard, and then work hard again? Then more would get done, right?

Apparently not. Ever get an eye-roll from your personal trainer? Me neither, because she's too nice, but I bet there was part of her that really wanted to.

The story is that apparently, you don't build muscle while you're working out - you build it in recovery. Your strength increases in direct relation to your ability to rest.

Now, let's turn that into an analogy and take it for a spin...

You're an entrepreneur, and you're busy AF. If you're like most of us, you got into the game because you have a deep - possibly pathological - need to change the status quo.

It's no coincidence that entrepreneurs are [disproportionately affected by ADD](#), which brings a whole host of superpowers that are desperately needed in the world of startups and business. From being incredibly useful in a crisis to having boatloads of creativity and intuition, those of us - yes, I said "us" - with this supposed disorder leap small businesses in a single bound and have laser vision focus once we're actually in the zone. Didn't expect that, did you? Oh, and we do love change.

CHANGE ≠ PROGRESS

Sometimes, it feels like doing something is better than doing nothing, but the reality is... doing nothing is better than doing something wrong. A little rest, lifting your foot off of that gas pedal, and giving yourself some breathing room can be the most effective bit of work you've done in weeks. Sometimes the most productive thing you can do is take a nap.

How to Actually Calm the @\$% Down

I guarantee you I do not regularly exist in this space. In the past few years, I've received many kind recommendations to slow down, relax, and rest. I've been told I "deserve it" - which makes no sense to me.

That sounds *boring*. But since I'm up against science here and would rather be successful than right, I needed to incorporate this whole "rest" thing into my day. But how?

No, seriously, I didn't know how.

Thankfully, we have access to all kinds of professionals, and here's what we've learned about how to create calm spaces in your life.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

I love the title of Sylvia Boorstein's book on mindfulness: *Don't Just Do Something, Sit There*. For those of us with squirrels in our brains, this is very *difficult*. The key thing to remember here is "practice." It's something you just take stabs at and keep trying.

MEDITATION

I've had this concept thrown at me so many times I cannot count, and I do math for a living. I've tried sitting down and just making my mind blank (it doesn't do that, I don't care what you say). I've tried it with other people (all I do is listen to them

breathe and make up stories in my head about them - you don't want to be silent in a room with me). I've tried the meditation apps, and I've tried those YouTube meditation videos ([this](#) is my favourite). They didn't work. Everything about meditation sucked until a mentor of mine said, "Have you tried Walking Meditation?" Mind. Blown. I have the benefit of an additional H in the ADD world - that'd be Hyperactivity, my friends - and just *sitting still doing nothing* is a recipe for disaster. Walking meditation is a thing. It works. There is, in fact, something for everyone.

PLAN LIKE A BOSS

It's really hard to make good strategic decisions in the moment. If you're always making decisions off-the-cuff, then there's a good chance that they aren't well thought out, which means a lot of them won't land, and you'll be busier and more frustrated than you were before... and the hits just keep piling up until they overwhelm you. Save yourself from pain, frustration, and utter failure by *committing* time and space for planning.

DEFINE SUCCESS

On your own terms. Success isn't what the magazines tell you it is. The magazines sell ad space and those ads want you to consume; they don't care about your sense of fulfillment and purpose. Get real about what "success" means to you, what it looks like - down to the hours in the day and what you do with

them. You'll find out what you want, when you want it, and suddenly, you'll see a pathway to getting there (or, with help, you'll find it once you've got the goal posts set up). You know what that gives you? The room and the reason to say "no" to things that aren't part of your success. All the "what ifs" are removed. The person on the other end of the phone can give you all the reasons why *this* or *that* is going to make you successful but you won't even have to listen - because you'll know what you need.

CELEBRATE YOUR WINS

You know we love doing this, but it's not *just* because we like gold stars (but we loooove gold stars). Celebrating your wins helps you realize that you ARE making progress, and you don't have to constantly tweak things that don't need tweaking.

PUT SOMEONE ELSE IN CHARGE

Gasp! No, really. I've got a Slayer managing my calendar. It's not because I'm entirely incompetent with scheduling - though

I have to admit, I'm not great at it - it's because if I'm left to my own devices, I will say "YES" to everything and as it is, managing my calendar is at least a half day's work, every day. I trust the Slayers on my team to tell me when stuff just isn't possible, and when they do, I back off.

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION

Block off time for rest. Count it. Give yourself points. Share resting as one of the wins in your life with your team. Get credit for it. Define what rest looks like (it's not reading your email, just FYI). Remind yourself that your brain, your team, your creativity, and your business will be definitively stronger in relation to how much you rest.

Just like those muscles Nikki is confident I'll build, we break down our creativity, initiative, and productivity with hard work. We build them back up again by taking breaks, and giving our brains and bodies the downtime they need to power up again.

4 EASY AND AFFORDABLE SELF-CARE SERVICES

From the Admin Slayer blog

When was the last time you put yourself first, ahead of your business? If you can't even remember, chances are that it's been too long. Take it from us: you need to. After all, productivity isn't just about working harder; it's also about working smarter, and self-care is an important component of productivity. There are apps and online services for literally everything you can think of. Here are a few that make it easy to put yourself first whether at home, at the office, or on the go.

[SOOTHE.COM](https://www.soothe.com)

When you've got a lot on the go, sometimes it's hard, if not near impossible, to get to the spa. Luckily, the spa can now come to you! Soothe is a mobile massage therapy app and service providing quality deep tissue, Swedish, sports, and prenatal massage by RMTs in the comfort of your own home or office. Services are currently available in Toronto and Vancouver, with plans to expand to more Canadian cities.

[HEADSPACE.COM](https://www.headspace.com)

Could you use less stress and better sleep in your life? If you could (we certainly do!) then the Headspace.com meditation app is the app for you. Headspace offers a free introductory ten session series called Take10 that teaches you "how to train your mind for a happier, healthier life." Each session is only ten

minutes long making them perfect for coffee or lunch breaks (and yes, you should take a lunch break!)

[TINYHEART.COM/QUICKFIT-7-MINUTE-WORKOUT](https://www.tinyheart.com/quickfit-7-minute-workout)

Sometimes the best medicine for the body and soul is a good old-fashioned workout but just like the spa, making it to the gym after a long day can be a challenge. This low-cost app brings the gym to you with a variety of seven-minute exercise routines to suit your particular needs. There's the Quick 7, Quick Abs, and Quick Yoga. There's also the free Quick 4, a complete full body workout in just four minutes!

[FLOATHOUSE.CA](https://www.floathouse.ca)

Do you ever have those days where you wish you could shut yourself off and have a few minutes of utter silence? Well, now you can! Sensory deprivation tanks or "floating" helps lower blood pressure, decrease stress, increase endorphins, and more. With several locations in Greater Vancouver and one in Edmonton, Float House offers 90-minute sessions ranging from \$39 - \$75 a float. You can also opt for a Membership option which is shareable and offers discounts on extra floats, retail items, massage partners, and more.

ADD AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

By Krysten Merriman

If I had to summarize what working feels like with ADD: there are some things I do at 10 times the speed of a 'normal' person, and other things that take me 10 times as long. Most people I work with think I'm either a genius or an idiot - I'll figure out an elegant solution to a really thorny problem, but then struggle to respond to a simple email in a timely fashion - or forget to respond at all.

I should begin with a disclaimer: obviously, I'm not a doctor and this article isn't intended as medical advice. However, I *am* a business owner who has learned to (mostly) manage my ADD. And by manage, I mean using my strengths to my advantage while reducing the negative impact of my weaknesses. That's the paradox of entrepreneurs with ADD - managing your business when managing your *life* is a full-time job.

10 Tips for Optimizing Your Life as a Business Owner with ADD

1. GET AN ASSISTANT

There's a reason this is at the top of the list. Even if you read and agree with everything on this list, *you will not execute all*

the suggestions without help. You need to be reminded. Cajoled. Coerced, even. This has to be someone you like enough that you won't avoid them when they inevitably pester you. But not someone so similar to you that they share your weaknesses. Complementary skills are what we're going for here. **Coming up with ideas is your innate gift, but your success will be determined by the amount of work that you finish.**

So find someone who genuinely enjoys executing, and is happy to let you be the 'ideas person'.

2. FIND A LIKE-MINDED MENTOR, BUSINESS PARTNER, OR COACH, IF YOU CAN

You'll be more likely to finish your projects if you have someone else to bounce your ideas around with. Note that this person is probably not your spouse and definitely not your assistant. Your spouse may listen patiently while you ramble on about your current obsession, but their excitement may be dampened by other aspects of your relationship (see #6). Your assistant's job is to help *manage* your creative impulses by relieving you of routine tasks and reminding you of things you're likely to forget.

3. MANAGE YOUR ATTENTION, NOT JUST YOUR TIME

Too many productivity articles focus on *time management*. But time is not your enemy. Sometimes, it's not even relevant at all. Most people can only spend a limited amount of time on anything, even if they enjoy it. But not you. If you find something interesting, you can spend *hours upon hours* of hyper-focused time getting it done. You may be able to work 12 hour days for weeks on end without getting burnt out at all. But when it comes to items that aren't particularly interesting, you have a finite amount of attention that you can spend through sheer force of will. Be very conscious of how you spend that attention. The amount of energy you have to spend on boring tasks is your scarcest resource.

4. OPTIMIZE YOUR WORK ROUTINE TO MAXIMIZE YOUR EFFICIENCY

Maybe the word 'routine' makes you cringe, but ultimately you need one. You don't need to do the exact same thing every day, but organizing your activities into clusters will help you focus. For example:

Monday: organizing your week, prepping for important meetings or projects, and reviewing goals.

Tuesday: hardcore focus on your most important business functions. Depending on the kind of business you're in, this could be meeting with prospective clients or designing and delivering your product.

Wednesday: addressing anything important that came up while you were hyper-focused on Tuesday, and prepping for your hyper-focused Thursday.

Thursday: another hardcore, "get 'er done" hyper-focus day.

Friday: internal meetings, phone calls, and time for unstructured big-picture thinking.

5. BE RUTHLESS ABOUT MINIMIZING DISTRACTIONS AND SAYING "NO"

Studies tell us that it can take up to 25 minutes to regain focus after being interrupted by a distraction. My guess is that for anyone with ADD, it's even longer.

- **Stop taking unscheduled calls.** When you simply answer the phone every time it rings, you are basically leaving your productivity and success to the whims of other people and *their* agendas. Have your assistant or an answering service filter and prioritize your calls, and schedule time for you to return them.
- **Avoid the email vortex.** Remember that not all emails are created equal, and they don't necessarily need your instant attention. Ideally, you should hand your inbox over to your assistant and have them set up a triage system:
 - Simple requests and meeting invites can be handled by your assistant without you spending any brain power on them.

- Items that need your input can be batched together and handled at one or two designated times during the day
- Have a 'big red button' for urgent, high-value inquiries. This might mean having your assistant send you a text message when something needs to be handled right away.
- **Disable notifications on your phone, and delete apps that you know are a time suck.** Schedule time in your calendar to catch up on Facebook or do your online shopping if you must, but remove the temptation to fire them up every time you find yourself with a few spare moments (like standing in an elevator or waiting for a website to load).

6. ACCEPT YOUR LIMITATIONS AND UNDERSTAND THAT THEY CAN BE A CHALLENGE FOR OTHERS TO DEAL WITH

This is especially true for the people closest to you. Nobody likes the drudgery of household cleaning and chores, but most people are able to do it anyway. For the adult with ADD, however, simple things like doing laundry, paying bills, and remembering to take out the garbage can seem damn near impossible. And this is endlessly exasperating for the people around you who find themselves picking up after you just to avoid living in squalor. Clutter and mess make it even harder for the ADD person to concentrate, and yet keeping things tidy is incredibly challenging.

If you do nothing else on this list, hire a housekeeper.

7. SCHEDULE EVERYTHING, INCLUDING QUALITY TIME WITH YOUR SPOUSE

This is not a joke. Put your assistant in charge of your calendar, and have them set aside time for date nights and family vacations before it fills up with work and meetings. It may not sound romantic, but if you want to keep the relationship you've got, you have to invest the time and effort. In fact, your spouse may be relieved to coordinate with an assistant on your behalf, if it means you're able to plan things in advance and have them actually happen.

8. MAINTAIN YOUR PHYSICAL SELF

EATING

- When you get into something interesting, it can be hard to pull yourself away. I know I've struggled with just how *time-consuming* it is to prepare proper meals, never mind sitting down and eating them like a normal person.
- Mind your protein intake. There are studies showing that protein can be especially helpful to the ADHD brain.

SLEEPING

- This can be a tough one, especially if you've got an atypical chronotype. Personally, I have a terrible time getting going in the morning, but by the evening I'm firing on all cylinders. And once the workday is over, the emails stop coming in and everything is quiet so I can finally focus, the last thing I want to do is try to wind down and go to sleep.
- When my partner is out of town, I have a tendency to get carried away with work and stay up until 3 am or later. But then of course, my next day is shot and my whole week gets out of whack.
- Create a wind-down ritual that you can actually look forward to (i.e. doesn't feel 'boring') and that doesn't involve a computer or mobile screen. For me, it's reading a sci-fi paperback, with meditation music on in the background.

EXERCISING

Exercise is another tough nut to crack if you don't find it innately satisfying. If you've got the 'H' in ADHD, it might be perfectly natural for you to find a healthy exercise outlet - in fact, you may even *need* it in order to sit still for any length of time during the day. If you're the inattentive type, it may be a struggle to see exercise as anything other than a boring waste of time. Only recently have I found an outlet I can do consistently: weight training. Despite the time commitment,

I've noticed a significant improvement in my ability to focus when I'm training consistently.

9. GET A PROFESSIONAL OPINION. AS IN, A DOCTOR OR PSYCHIATRIST

It's not uncommon for people with ADD to get an initial diagnosis of anxiety, depression, or something else entirely. If you suspect you may have ADD, try to find a specialist who can tell you for sure. Bear in mind that not all doctors and mental health professionals have sufficient training with regards to clinical attention problems. And without an ADD diagnosis, ***some depression and anxiety meds can actually make your ADD symptoms worse.*** Finally, mood disorders can turn out to be symptoms of untreated ADD. By correctly diagnosing and treating the underlying issue, you may find your other symptoms resolve themselves.

10. TAKE YOUR MEDS (IF YOU AND YOUR DOCTOR HAVE DECIDED MEDICATION IS RIGHT FOR YOU)

Not everyone with ADD needs or benefits from medication. But if you have consulted with your doctor or psychiatrist and determined that medication can help you, take it consistently. And remember that professional treatment is not a one-shot deal - ideally, you should create a relationship with a professional who understands your condition and can monitor and adjust your treatment as you make progress.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As I mentioned before, this article isn't meant to diagnose or treat any condition, including ADD. But if any of it resonates with you, you might find the 10 tips above to be helpful.

Ultimately, the goal is to understand yourself and outsource the things you will probably never excel at, so you can hyper-focus on the important, interesting, and profitable stuff.



Krysten Merriman

Krysten is a cofounder of [Admin Slayer](#) and [Spring Financial Planning](#), as well as the force-to-be-reckoned with behind [Merriman Marketing](#), which supports great companies like [ModernAdvisor](#) and [Jay Palter Social Advisory](#). So much more than a marketing specialist (but a damn good one), Krysten is a whirlwind of analysis, innovation, creation, and effectiveness. Our CEO, Julia Chung, is madly in love with her and insists on dragging Krysten into every single business activity she finds. Our company - and this ebook - wouldn't exist without her.

ENTREPRENEURS AND RELATIONSHIPS

By Julia Chung and Krysten Merriman

Try these statements on for size:

- Humans need relationships.
- Entrepreneurs are humans.

No really, they're both true. If we build on those statements, then we get this one:

Business success is a hollow, empty thing without personal success.

Money and all its trappings get kind of boring after a certain point. Trust us, we've seen it happen. Achievements and external gains are meaningless if you're celebrating all by yourself. Yes, even if you're an introvert (introverts need people too, even if they sort of hate them).

If you're an entrepreneur and in a romantic relationship, you may feel torn between your two loves: your partner, and your business. Each one may be jealous of the other, and you may feel like you're doing a crappy job at one - or both. Your partner may resent your business (either openly or secretly).

¹⁰ That's Shakespeare. We're fancy.

¹¹ Execution. Not executive.

Those job postings, highlighted and printed on your kitchen table, are a neon sign that something is rotten in the state of Denmark¹⁰.

It is possible - albeit tricky - to launch and run a successful business, and have successful relationships at the same time.

A LITTLE HOW TO

The exec¹¹ team at Admin Slayer is full of robots. Figuratively. We're real, live humans, but we're procedure nuts and we take that into the weirdest places, like our relationships. Hey, why fix what ain't broke? You can effect positive change in your relationships with process.

THINK OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP LIKE A BUSINESS

It's the Business of Home, and just like that other business:

- You need to invest in it.
- You need to work at it.
- Any kind of success will take time, effort, and consistency.

There will be failures and successes throughout the life of your relationship. Some will fail early, some will fail later, but failures will occur. Successes can follow those failures with the commitment and diligence of both partners.

There's no guarantee of success. Your business of home can fail, and your partner can leave, if either of you becomes complacent.

CREATE STRUCTURE, AND A PLAN

Any great success requires careful planning. Doesn't sound romantic? That's okay. Romance doesn't pay the bills. It's simply one factor in your multi-faceted relationship. Imagining everything will just work out because **Love Will Find a Way** is pure silliness and a silent request for failure.

You want this to work? Then you need to work.

Schedule regular dates. If you're not making time for your spouse right now, turn it around. Carve time out of your schedule, just for them. Spontaneity isn't the be-all, end-all. Making this person important to your life is. Show 'em that you mean it.

Create a vision together. Your spouse may not realize that the madness of those first 3-5 years of business is actually just for those first 3-5 years. Tell them where you're planning on taking this thing, and what it means for you two. Talk dreams. Talk

purpose, and then set goals - together - about how you're getting there, and when you want that to be.

Have regular check-ins on your goals (and your relationship). What's the business doing and how does that impact your plans for your relationship? What's happening in your spouse's life that will impact your plans? What needs tweaking, changing, and discussion? Your partner in life deserves the same care, attention, and communication as your customers and your partners in business.

Get help. Delegate the things you don't need to be doing in your business, the things that are taking away from your relationships. Take a look at your home as well - what can you delegate there?

Remind yourself what **matters**, and make sure your behaviours are aligning with your stated intentions. Talk is cheap. Action matters.

MAKE YOUR PARTNER YOUR NUMBER ONE CLIENT

How do you want to treat your best customers? You've probably got a written structure describing how the people who help your business achieve success are treated (if you don't, you've got some writing to do). How would you feel if someone treated your customers poorly?

There are plenty of business owners who treat their romantic partners in ways they would never allow their clients to be

treated. Being late, muting phone calls and texts, ignoring or blowing off commitments - it's not okay. No matter what you're up against, your number one supporter needs to be supported.

Honour your commitments. Your scheduled date nights are only valuable if they happen. Be someone your partner can count on.

When you're together, be present. No one and nothing is so important that you can't turn off your phone for a few hours. Show your partner that they matter.

Save your best self for your partner. For quality time together to be meaningful, you can't be an exhausted cranky pants. Prepare yourself to be awake, rested, and engaged for those times when you are with your partner.

You want them to keep showing up in your life, so you need to keep showing up in theirs.

THERAPY IS NOT GIVING UP

Not sure how to break your patterns? Consider therapy or counselling. Whether it's for you, or for both of you as a couple, getting professional help in any arena where you're struggling is a great idea.

We hire professionals for our legal concerns, our accounting, finance, technology, and much more, without a lick of shame. Some people know things we don't, and they can make it easier for us to attain success. Stow your ego and ask for the help you need.

REMEMBER

There's a reason you chose your partner, (or will, if you're currently single) and a reason they chose you (ditto). Your entrepreneurial drive was likely one of the many things they found so attractive. Apply the passion that you bring to your business to every corner of your life, especially that all-important partnership. Success is far more fun when you're together.

Editor's Note

We decided to add an introductory note to this article because you may very well be thinking: "What does this have to do with business?" We get it. We asked the same thing.

The truth is, just like any other aspect of physical, mental, and spiritual¹² health, sexuality impacts our well being - whether we want to talk about or not. Of course, if you are celibate for religious reasons or asexual, this may not apply. If that's the case, feel free to skip ahead to the next chapter, or stop and have a read to find out what's going on with the rest of us.

In the previous chapter, we talked about the importance of relationships. You already know that a healthy sex life can enhance your romantic relationship¹³. It's one of those things that, if it's going well, it's not a huge concern, but if it's going badly, it's a massive concern. Great sex can really help you and your partner thrive through the inevitable challenges that result from the insanity of the entrepreneurial life, while awful or zero sex can amplify the pain.

Even if you're not in a relationship, neglecting your sexual relationship with yourself isn't going to help anything. Ironically, it's kind of like exercise in that it not only expends energy but also creates it.

Here at Admin Slayer, we often joke about being a bunch of robots - and not in the potentially "sexy" AI way - but we know that feeling attractive and connected with our bodies is important. We invite you to open your mind and give Angela's article a read. If it makes you a little squeamish, that's probably okay.

¹² Some of us don't have a handle on what "spiritual" means to us either, or whether that's a useful thing.

¹³ Or, romantic relationships. You do you - both literally and figuratively. No judgement here.

SEXUALITY, CREATIVITY, AND YOUR BUSINESS

By Angela Thurston

Our business, our brand, our clarity, and our energy levels are affected by our relationship with our bodies and sex. When we connect with, heal and prioritize our sexuality, we experience calmness, presence, radiance and confidence which amplifies our ability to build the lives and businesses we desire.

Most of us don't even consider how our sexual pleasure affects our business. We invest time and money in brilliant business coaches, plans, systems, strategies, online programs, mindset training, and may be completely neglecting our deepest selves. Even with all of those necessary pieces in place, we may still be wondering why we are not joyful, fulfilled, or successful. When our sexual essence is not developed, nourished or tended to, it weakens our entire system.

Unfortunately, mainstream culture doesn't teach us (and by "us", I mostly mean women) how to build a positive relationship with our bodies and the power of our sexuality. In order for us to initiate this natural resource into action there are some conscious steps that are required.

CHOOSING PLEASURE

It's a sad fact that popular culture fetishizes the obsessive way many entrepreneurs approach their businesses. There's almost

a competitive aspect: whoever works the longest hours and sacrifices the most will win, right? In this context, [self-love](#) can be an alien concept.

When we get really busy, sex can be the first 'luxury' that drops off. Who has the time, right? Sex can seem unnecessary or even frivolous - an indulgence that 'real' hustling business owners can't afford to spend their precious time or energy on.

Our mindset is an essential component in our ability to overcome obstacles and shift patterned behaviours. Our sexuality is no different. Pleasure is an intentional choice. When we say yes to sexual pleasure it has a direct impact on our capacity to generate and receive — affecting our proficiency in attracting new clients, partnerships, and money.

MEDITATING VIA OUR SENSUAL CENTRE

The best way that I have found to increase connection between mind and body is by directing attention and conscious awareness to our sensual centre (a.k.a. our pelvic bowl).

Our sensual centre (for women) encompasses our pelvic bones, our ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus and vulva (what I like to call our "organs of mass creation"). Note that you do not need to

have these physical organs in order to benefit from meditating on them.

I encourage my clients to use the creative energy that arises from this style of meditation in multiple areas of their lives. The magnitude of the energy we can generate has a direct correlation with the ways in which we nourish our lives. It can be the powerhouse which fuels your personal growth, your creative pursuits, your professional and financial success, and the evolution of all your relationships.

SEX...IS MANY PEOPLE'S ONLY EXPERIENCE OF MEDITATION.

- Deepak Chopra

OUR SEXUAL ENERGY

I believe that there is no personal power greater than that of our orgasms, and when we choose pleasure and bring attention and conscious awareness to the efficacy of our sensual centre we can successfully plant and nourish the seeds of our desires.

We are the predominant creative force in our lives. When we commit to a self-pleasuring meditative practice it becomes possible for us to infuse our desired outcomes with the creative force of our pleasure. This directly impacts how we engage with the world, and how the world engages with us.



Angela Thurston

We met Angela Thurston at PowHERtalks and were kind of uncomfortable and then aroused excited about what she's doing to create change and support business owners in personal growth. She's highly educated in TaoTantric Arts, Bodysex, and all the other stuff that makes us conservative Canadians kind of squirmy. Yes, bringing Angela and her shockingly open perspective on sexuality may seem out of place in a book for entrepreneurs, but we want you at your most powerful. If that power comes from your orgasms, that's kind of awesome, isn't it? No, really. That's awesome.

ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

By Ian Macnaughton, MBA, Ph.D.

In today's climate, a successful entrepreneur is one who can operate at an ever-increasing rate of change. To manage this change, you must institute a dynamic, flexible organization within your business, one that finds a balance between innovation and stability, between comfort and chaos, between uncertainty and permanence.

As your business grows, you must continually optimize your creativity and passion in order to stay relevant, but create a steadfastness that your team can rely upon. Challenges like these are the fuel for entrepreneurial creativity.

You are a creative thinker; one who sees the potential for what may be. You think beyond bottom-line concerns, always looking forward, ready to expand to the next level. You will confront many hurdles as you initiate your ideas and build the team that you need to support it.

DEVELOPING YOUR LEADERSHIP PRESENCE

Too many entrepreneurs believe everyone "who matters" will buy into their vision; that those who don't simply must be left behind. Having a powerful vision is one thing - being able to

communicate it and create the engagement you need to build a successful business is quite another thing entirely.

Most business plans and business development processes focus on productivity, sales, marketing, and financial structures. Creating a solid foundation for your business, one that will withstand the test of time, requires that you incorporate at least one more focus: the development of the relational skills that you will need to engage your team.

Your new role, as a business leader, is to create and maintain morale and engagement. Without solid morale, productivity goes out the window¹⁴.

Without engagement from your team, it's only a matter of time before your company not only stalls, but also struggles to survive.

CREATIVITY. FLOW. STRUCTURE.

How will you channel it? How will you engage your team, align them with your mission? How will they stay connected, especially when the process is likely to be stressful?

¹⁴ Philippe A. Barrette, PhD, Strengthening Workplace Relationships™, www.philbarrette.com

In the old days, a “carrot-or-stick” management approach - increasing wages, or threatening dismissal (whether implicit or explicit) - was common and popular. People work for money, don’t they? But, today, people work for so much more. They work for life balance, for purpose, and for meaning. Building a resilient business that supports innovation, vitality, and personal growth is the new normal.

You must possess the skills to look within yourself, to explore your own patterns, your previous background and experience (both personal and professional).

Looking internally, understanding how you created your sense of identity, and what changes you need to make, are vital to the development of a strong leader.

Successful leadership stems from a place of self-knowledge. You must be in a conscious, mindful place. Leaders must have the ability to use language - including tonality - effectively. They must not only have a clear vision of the future, but also what the work will be, and how the team can work together to meet expectations.

Communication and trust are vital for harmony within any system, whether business or personal. It is essential to manage and improve what are often considered the “soft skills” (which

are so much harder to learn than technical skills) required for leading team dynamics.

From process and structure to communication tools, conflict resolution, and managing relationships: these are the mechanisms you must employ to create a powerful, sustainable business.

YOUR NEW CHARACTER TRAITS

Successful entrepreneurs, who transition into strong leaders, develop and hone the following foundational character traits¹⁵:

- A guiding vision that clearly defines what you want (both personally and professionally), as well as the strength and resilience to persist despite setbacks and failure.
- A passion for what you do, how you do it, and the ability to communicate it in a way that inspires others.
- Integrity: being accountable to match your words and behaviour to your vision, deep self-knowledge, candour, and maturity.
- The ability to create and maintain trust by being constant, congruent with your words, and reliable for your team.
- Intense curiosity, to learn as much as you can, and the willingness to take risks, be daring, innovative, and experimental.

¹⁵ Warren Bennis, deemed “the dean of leadership gurus” by Forbes magazine, has argued persuasively that leaders are not born—they are made. For more information on his leadership traits see his text *On Becoming a Leader*, 1989, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.

YOUR NEW LEADERSHIP STYLE

Your strong leadership style will blend your new character traits with these effective abilities:

- Clearly articulate what you want.
- Determine whether your team understands what you are asking, and to change your communication to ensure that they do. A key to that is ensuring that people's roles match their talents and motivations, that they are clearly defined and include their input.
- Determine the action plan which needs to be created to enact your stated goals.
- Understand the differences between your motivation as the CEO and the actual skills your team needs to carry out tasks, staying both motivated and engaged.

It is your professional responsibility to also become a boundary manager between the internal workings of your team, and the turbulent seas of the outside world of economics and social change. You are the filter, determining what information your business and your team needs to sustain and grow itself, and what information can be reviewed and set aside for future contemplation.

MANAGING CONFLICT

Conflict is inevitable¹⁶ - it's part of life. We have all been involved in differences that result in stressful, and at times,

seemingly irreconcilable differences. Often, these moments are unexpected, as we are surprised when it turns out that others are not like us. We easily fail to notice those differences that can lead to conflict.

Brain research indicates that when conflict becomes too stressful, the executive function of our brain goes offline, and more reactive aspects of our psycho-neurology and animal nature become active. Our mature thinking drops off, and we act in ways that we often regret.

Relationships are at the centre of any successful business, so we can expect conflict within the complexity of our teams.

Successful business leaders must develop skills to manage conflict. De-escalating conflict means separating people from problems. You must develop the ability to focus on:

- Interests, not positions
- Mutual goals
- Options for mutual gain
- Agreement on objective criteria (ground rules for engagement, respect, listening, time-outs, generosity)

Three systems interplay in any conflict: our brain (hardware, embodied, relational); our mind (our consciousness beyond the brain); and our interpersonal relationship skills (curiosity,

¹⁶ Information regarding conflict reprinted with permission. Macnaughton, I. (2016). *The Family Business: Values and Succession. The Scrivener, 25(2)*.

listening, mirroring). While conflicts are never easy, they are inescapable and can be managed effectively, allowing for smooth transitions and closer team relationships.

Learning how to manage conflicts often results in:

- Improved alignment between theory and reality
- Improved productivity through increased morale¹⁷
- Effective team communication
- Increasing mutual respect
- Better decision making with full information and greater team buy-in

- An increase in the team's sense of security about the future
- Open resolutions to key issues and strengthened trust
- Teams that are well-equipped with the ability to address new challenges, transitions, and change

True entrepreneurial leadership comes from walking your talk and clear communication. It's ensuring your team understands that you are accountable for your words and your behaviour, and that everyone on every level of your team is held to the same high standards. It's creating a vision and purpose that all team members can engage with, believe in, and strive towards together.



Ian Macnaughton, MBA, Ph.D., FEA

Ian advises families in business and families of wealth, and is a treasured mentor to Admin Slayer's CEO. He is a Fellow of the Family Firm Institute, associate faculty member of City University (Vancouver site) and has taught at numerous universities and colleges, both undergraduate and graduate, in psychology and business. Ian is a published author, widely experienced business owner, and a trusted voice around the world in business, counselling, and personal growth.

¹⁷ Philippe A. Barrette, PhD. Strengthening Workplace Relationships™



PART 6: MARKETING

The Best Things in Marketing are Free.....	102
Yes, Photography Matters	106
Video Production for Entrepreneurs	112
5 Underused Content Types	115
Influencer Engagement	118
Social Media Tools.....	121
Handy Website Tools	123

What is marketing? Is it your online presence, like your website and social media? Simply another word for 'sales'? The truth is that marketing runs through every single aspect of your business. It comes down to communication. Everything from the way you present your business visually, to what you talk about - and how, to your community presence and even how you answer your phone (or have it answered for you). Each point of contact is an opportunity to tell the world more about your business, what you do, and why you're the best choice. Marketing can even be about getting in front of people you never thought would talk to you and making them your advocates.

The experts in this section know how to help you look and sound amazing, and get those people talking about you in the way you want to be talked about. Ready to make an impact? Yeah you are.

THE BEST THINGS IN MARKETING ARE FREE

By Karen Bannister

The golden ticket in marketing isn't a billboard in Times Square. It isn't premium placement in your local newspaper or a really great event sponsorship that offers you a table in the lobby. The best marketing happens organically, seamlessly and seemingly effortlessly, straight from the lips of others.

Word-of-mouth marketing is the oldest form of advertising and happens when one person is so blown away by your product, service, or both, that they tell one, a few, or even many other people about it. This is an authentic expression of appreciation, an opinion delivered from a trusted source, like a stamp of approval, and this authority is powerfully persuasive. When a friend tells you she had the most delicious coffee recently, you ask where. When your neighbour recommends a tree cutting service, you copy down the number. We rely on the opinions of others because it saves us time and cuts back on uncertainty, and because we are always seeking the best, the cheapest, and the most pleasurable experience. We value good work, and know from experience it can be hard to find.

You can't buy word-of-mouth marketing. You can't add it to your marketing plan and hire an agency to go and get it for you. But, luckily, you can put into practice a collection of ten principles, which combined will give you the opportunity to

build a tribe of brand ambassadors, all singing your praises. The effect is viral, catching and easily authentic.

Here are 10 ways you can nurture word-of-mouth marketing:

1. LISTEN INTENTLY

The most underrated and most useful skill in business has nothing to do with what you write or say: listening is your true superpower. Define your ideal customer and then go into their spaces – whether virtually or in real life – and listen to what they have to say. How do they define the problem they are having? What qualities are they looking for in the solution? An amazing experience is really only one that adequately and impressively met our needs. Listen to the need, find the best and most effective way at filling it and you will be well on your way. Use surveys, digital listening and one-on-one interviews to dig deep into how you can show up as useful in business.

Never stop listening – research is not for development only. Put your product or service out there, see how it lands, listen, adjust. Repeat.

2. DEFINE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

This principle can be simply put: under-promise and over-deliver. A common marketing pitfall is the giant promise – the one so big it can never really be fulfilled. The over-promise is the high bar set by telling people your product will absolutely change their world, change their life, make everything better. It won't. Let's face it! It is far better to be precise about the specific and limited ways in which your product or service will be impactful. It may change a person's perspective, but let that be a funny byproduct experienced by the lucky few, and consistent delivery of a reasoned solution – ah, let that be the triumph.

3. INVEST IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

We all know investing in points of contact with your customer is smart, and yet good customer service today is hard to find.

People connect with people. Business is predicated on human relationships, not brand attachment. If you are not the only person in your company interacting with your customers, then be aware that your customers will come to like, love or hate you based on their relationship with your front line. Create feel-good experiences for your customers and go out of your way to provide nuanced responses that feel personal and authentic.

Be thoughtful, prompt, realistic and above all else keep their problems and your superior solution in mind.

Hire people who are invested in carrying forward your core values. Hire within your core values; your employees should be natural members of your tribe because they share your vision.

4. RESPOND PROMPTLY TO FEEDBACK

Crisis management comes down to timely and appropriate responses. In the event that someone is less than happy with your product or service, be inquisitive and not defensive. Go in armed with a curiosity and an openness and quickly offer a solution that affirms your beliefs and values. Use keyword search tools to monitor your brand online and be active on social media. Take concerns offline whenever possible, while acknowledging to your community your willingness to address customer service issues.

5. GET ACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

It is hard to avoid having a social presence in business these days. Your customers are on social media, and this is a forum for sharing advice, tips and recommendations. Monitor the conversations in your industry and avoid being taken by surprise by news, a negative share or an advantage your competition might have over you.

Many people assume social media is about talking about how amazing your business is - sharing news and stories that brand a business as positive, fun and in-demand. Done right, it is actually less advertising and more listening to existing

conversations, adding your voice, building trust and authority with your helpfulness and generating new discussions. Stop talking, use social media to listen.

6. LIVE YOUR CORE VALUES, AUTHENTICALLY

What promise do you make to your customer? Your brand is built on that promise and it needs to be in tune with your passion and your purpose - the why that drives your business.

Know who you are, what your business stands for and create policy, product and opportunities for sales and interaction from that knowledge. Look for customers that match your core promise, because these are the people who will get what you are offering, and want more of it. If you sell tie-dyed shirts, you need to find the people who value the vibrancy of colour, and your authenticity comes from the reason why you sell such visually stunning clothing pieces. Don't try to be something to the people who seek grey toned clothing. Unless they are ready to live outside their comfort zone and find a new way, they won't love what you offer. It's easier to find the advocates, than to convert those on the fence.

7. PLAY UP WHAT MAKES YOU EXCEPTIONAL

Part of knowing yourself - you as a business owner and as a brand - comes from knowing what makes you different from other businesses in your product or service category. By virtue of being you, you are distinct from your competition. Find this

edge of uniqueness and play with it. Express it clearly and consistently in your brand messaging and seek customers who value that particular difference. Too often business owners are afraid to get niche; they instead believe success lies in being everything to everyone. Mass doesn't work for anyone but the big brands, who have wide appeal. Small businesses thrive when they find, claim and own a corner of a market, small, distinct and specific.

8. BE HUMAN: FACILITATE HUMAN INTERACTIONS

When you are feeling stuck in a sales cycle, the very best way to generate business and to get unstuck is to get out of the office (or figuratively reach through the computer and touch another human being). Don't think about the interaction as a sales opportunity. Put aside the oppression of expectation and simply reach out to someone. Call an old customer. Don't sell them a new product but rather ask how they are, what challenges they are currently facing. Find a way to be useful - answer a question in a forum, join a Facebook group and offer to help people. Join a networking group or attend an event. Don't talk about yourself! Talk about solutions, ideas, connections. Be useful.

9. INVOLVE OTHERS IN DECISION-MAKING

Small business ownership is often incredibly lonely. As an owner, you are suddenly (unless blessed with a partner or two) in charge of just about everything. Making decisions can get

exhausting and you can be quite limited in your perspective as you get bogged down digging through your day to day. The best way to make decisions as a small business owner is through the support of other people in your life. Create an advisory committee for your business, even if members include your neighbour, best friend and your mother. Find other people who have unique experiences and perspectives to share, who understand the problem and solution your business is built on (maybe who actually share this concern) and ask them for their ideas. This is not to say you have to take it! But it helps you build a tribe of support around you.

10. REWARD BRAND AMBASSADORS

Find a way to express genuine thanks to those who do share news about your business. A “thank you” goes a long way, and

so do special bonuses for referrals. Don’t make referral or positive reviews a requirement (never make it a contest!) but for those who go above and beyond to sing your praises, find a genuine and heartfelt way to acknowledge their support and to say thank you.

Build a tribe around you and you will reap the rewards of positive word-of-mouth for your business. The key is genuine, authentic connection with others. This takes time, care and daily tending. Think of your tribe as a plant that needs to be watered daily. Don’t rush it. Take your time. And value human connection as the true engine of your business, above all else.



Karen Bannister

Karen works full time as a marketing specialist in destination management. She is formerly the owner of Entrepreneur Mom Now, a business networking group for women, where she first fell in love with the idea of tribe building. Karen also writes business and health articles for clients and publications and offers marketing strategy consultations. She lives with her family on Vancouver Island.

YES, PHOTOGRAPHY MATTERS

By Jessica Venturi

You may have hundreds of reasons why you don't need professional photography for your business. You have a fancy camera attached to your phone. Your kid has Photoshop. Besides, what really matters is how well you do your job and since you're not a photographer, it really doesn't matter that much, right?

No. No, that's not right.

Everything you put out into the world with your name / your business name on it is a reflection of the work you do. Even if that bit is not something you do for business - it's an expression of you and your business. A crappy website tells people that you're not taking your work seriously. A typo in your content or your newsletter tells people that you don't care enough about details. And an amateur photo? It makes you look - quite literally - like an amateur.

Have a quick look through your LinkedIn contacts. How many photos look like they were taken socially (rather than professionally), with the background poorly cut out of the photo? What are your first thoughts when you see these? We're going to bet they're not complimentary.

We interviewed the fabulous Jessica Venturi, professional business and fashion photographer, to find out what you need to know to in order to find a great photographer and look amazing in your headshots.



I DON'T NEED A HEADSHOT.

BULLSHIT.

If you are going to hire someone for any job, you are going to Google them. You will do your research, and determine if this is someone that you connect with. People want to get a feel for the person they're going to work with ahead of time. No one wants to go in blind. If you don't provide your prospective customers with the opportunity to look at and understand you, they will take their business to someone who does.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD HEADSHOT?

Headshots have changed a lot since the days where you sat down in a studio with a standard dark blue backdrop, hands on your lap. Now, a good headshot shows your personality a bit more. It may be a little looser, but still professional. Of course, it must be well-lit, and retouched!

Remember to actively look into the lens of a camera. Your photo must connect with the viewer. I see far too many headshots where the subject is looking just slightly off-camera. There's something off-putting about that, as though the person is a bit shifty, that they're hiding something. You don't quite know why, but for some reason, you just don't trust that person.



Jessica said this shot of Admin Slayer CEO, Julia Chung, is actually okay even though she's not looking at the camera, because it shows "personality"

CAN YOU REALLY MAKE A CONNECTION IN A PHOTO?

YES! This might be the very first time a person "sees" you. You want them to immediately feel engaged with you, and looking the camera right in the lens is one of the first ways to do that. You want to appear trustworthy and competent. Your photo is



your calling card, representing who you are (or want to be), and how you want to be seen. The photo should say that you know how to do your job - a shitty photo says you just don't know what you're doing.

All businesses are based on relationships. If there are twenty people that I can choose from to do your job, am I going to pick the person I have no connection with, and no feeling for who they are or what they do? If I came to your office and you

were wearing something entirely inappropriate to your job - for example if a professional (where the uniform is a suit) was wearing a pair of sweatpants I would be horrified. What have I done hiring this slovenly human? It's a reflection of what you do, and your photo matters just as much as your in-person appearance.

HOW DO WE DETERMINE IF A PHOTOGRAPHER IS "GOOD"?

(For those of us who are not photographers, or perhaps don't really have an eye for this kind of art, how do we have any idea who is good at this?) The best way is to look at their portfolio. Look for quality shots - especially for good lighting. Review the headshots they've taken. Do the people in those photos look the way you would want to look? Is the photo well retouched - does their skin look healthy? Real skin is a big deal. You don't want to look like a plastic doll.

How is the lighting? A badly-lit photo has shadows in all the wrong places. Look into the shadows. Are there lines on their face from the light being from the wrong direction? Is the photo unusually bright or unusually dark?

Once you review the photos, you'll start to realize that in some photos, people look as though they are live, vibrant - almost as though they are in-person, in front of you, and about to start a conversation. That's the mark of a great headshot.

Any photographer can give you the equivalent of that photo you had in high school. That takes zero skill. You want to find a photographer who is really, truly trying to make you look beautiful or handsome - trying to find your best angle. I'll shoot you from all kinds of angles, climbing on step ladders, and hanging from all over the room to try to find the one that is you. That's the difference between a standard "school" photographer and a professional.



WE'RE ALL NERVOUS ABOUT HAVING OUR PICTURES TAKEN. HOW DO WE PREPARE?

First of all, bathe! Clean hair is a great place to start. You have no idea how many people show up to a photo shoot looking a little dirty. I've used so much dry shampoo.

Second, be well-groomed. If your hands are going to end up in the shot, have your nails done (even if you're a man, get them trimmed and cleaned). If you're a woman, consider having your makeup done professionally, especially if you're unsure about your skill level.

If you're a man, make sure that you shave really closely - you'd be surprised how many patches people miss. You don't necessarily notice it until the photo is blown up to 400x its normal size and you think, "Whoa. What is that furry thing?"

If you don't take those steps, I have to fix them in Photoshop, which takes more time and costs you more money.

Pick flattering clothing you actually like and feel good in. If you don't feel good, your whole demeanor changes - you look as uncomfortable as you feel. Don't put on a top that you bought just because you think you "should." If you would never wear a white blouse, then don't wear a white blouse. Wear something that looks like you, something you would wear, which is appropriate to your job.

Make sure your clothes are clean - and ironed! If you're not great at ironing, take the outfit into a laundromat or dry cleaner. You want to look sharp and well put-together. If you don't have the outfit you really want - and maybe you can't afford it - then go buy one, leave the tags on, and return it! (Shhh).

Quick tip: You would be shocked how much cleavage I cover in retouching! Keep an eye on your cleavage when you're picking your outfit. It's far more noticeable in your business photos.



I'M SUPER UGLY AND LOOK TERRIBLE IN PHOTOS. WILL YOU FIX MY EVERYTHING?

Everyone thinks that they're hideous. They think they're fat and un-photogenic. It's all untrue; only a very small percentage of the population are actually any of those things. Even if you are most of those things, they can be fixed - you just need to ask your photographer.

Most people are actually quite photogenic. The problem is that we all see ourselves one way and the camera shows us who we really are, and what we really look like. It can be disconcerting. We're all 25 years old in our heads. We have to keep in mind that other people don't see the things that we see.

I can fix almost anything. I could turn you into a twelve-year-old if I wanted to. Realistically, I'll ask you how much you honestly want fixed. If you really hate your double chin, if you want me to take 10 years off, fill in your bald spot - you just have to ask. Be very specific about what retouching and the amount of retouching you want. I'll fix it just enough that you still look like you.

Gentle retouching takes 5 years and 5 pounds off everyone. If you're over 40, I just do it automatically as part of the service.

Your photo is your calling card. If you have a photo that doesn't look like you, or looks like you took it at a party or

some other unprofessional location, does that really tell people about who you are and what you do?

Have your photo send this simple message: **I am good at my job. I am a competent professional.**

All photos in this section courtesy of:

www.jessicaventuriphotography.com



Jessica Venturi

Jessica is a talented, award-winning fashion and art exhibition photographer who just happens to create amazing portraits of business leaders. Her work has been featured in international magazines such as Forbes, People, and Canadian Living. She's also been commissioned by well-known corporations such as Royal Bank, Morgan Stanley, Sappho, and Admin Slayer (see what we did there?). Jessica travels the world to work with clients, particularly in Europe. Keep an eye on her [Instagram account](#) for updates on her recent work and travels.

VIDEO PRODUCTION FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Your Roadmap for Success

By Jamie Munro

Depending on how long you've been in business, chances are you've thought about video production as a marketing tactic. I've talked to hundreds of business owners over the last few years on this topic and one of the main questions that comes up over and over again is where to even start?

With so many options for filming including DIY, professional and even FB Live, it's easy to get overwhelmed.

Combine that with perhaps a little bit of fear (gulp) of getting in front of the camera and this is a recipe for analysis paralysis. To help you through this common entrepreneurial dilemma, let's go through the following:

WHY

Don't use video just because everyone and their magical steed is doing it. First understand why you should even consider it in the first place.

WHEN

Whether you've been in business for a month or 5 years, there's a time and place for video depending on where you are at.

WHAT

What types of videos should you do? Case Studies? DIY? Cat videos?

HOW

Now that you know what you need, how do you go about doing it?

WHY THE HECK VIDEO?

When it comes to marketing choices for your business, we live in an age where the options are endless. So why video compared to other forms of marketing? The short and sweet answer is surprisingly simple: emotion.

Video has the power to move people to feel a certain way in a shorter period of time compared to most mediums, and since the majority of people buy on emotion and justify with logic later, video is the fastest, most effective way to influence a buyer's decision-making process.

Moreover, one of the most powerful emotions that video can evoke for a business owner is trust, and if done correctly a video that evokes this can turn a cold call into a warm lead, a networking follow-up into a faster sale and a post on Facebook into a flood of inquiries because you have connected with your ideal clients on this emotional level.

OK, SO I GET THE EMOTION PART, BUT WHEN DO I KNOW IF VIDEO IS RIGHT FOR ME?

Have you ever walked into a store with messaging that screamed “deals found here” only to find furniture that costs a year’s worth of rent? Nothing makes me cringe more than seeing a video put out by a business that fails to capture the essence of the brand, who they serve and how they help people. Why? Because it’s confusing - and if your ideal client is confused, they will not buy. Equally as bad, you will have people come to you that you do not want to be working with, who will become a huge time and energy suck.

Get on that video train only when it’s clear who should be on board, the experience they are getting, and how they will be transformed once they hop off at the other end.

I SHOULD START WITH A VIRAL CAT VIDEO, RIGHT?

Contrary to popular belief, cat videos are not the only type of content that people consume on a daily basis. Instead of taking a random stab in the dark, this is where understanding your buyer’s journey can turn a well-made video into one that brings you sales. From the minute a potential buyer comes into your world to their moment of purchase, what steps do they walk through and where are they likely to fall off?

For example, a lot of clients I work with get customers through networking events. However, one of their challenges is standing out from the 100s of competing financial planners,

realtors, and consultants that their potential buyers are talking to. How can they build on that connection from the event and increase the trust before the next conversation?

This is where a profile video is key - in under 3 minutes their potential clients not only gets to hear how they help people but they get to see them in action and understand what makes them different. The result? Increased trust and a much more effective follow-up call. The “what” when it comes to videos will be influenced by constantly asking, “how do I increase this trust and credibility at each stage of the buyer’s journey?”

I CAN JUST SHOOT THESE ON MY IPHONE, YES?

How you go about doing video marketing for your business will impact your results. And no, a self-shot iPhone video done in one take will typically not evoke the same emotion as a professional video with the right music, editing and visuals. However there is a time and a place for both.

When it comes to DIY videos, context is key. Is this the first thing potential buyers see when they land on your professional, well-polished website? Or are they finding this on Facebook and you are on-location doing an impromptu, in-the-moment check-in that can only be caught on your handy smartphone device?

DIY videos, regardless of the actual content of the videos themselves, communicate a message to viewers depending on

how and where they are used. A DIY video on a professional website indicates a lack of follow-through and quality, whereas capturing an impromptu business lesson learned while trekking through the rainforest indicates a sense of adventure and continuous self-development.

THAT'S A WRAP

Don't be the world's best-kept secret. If you are great at what you do, are clear on your messaging and who you serve, then it's time to add video to your marketing mix.



Jamie Munro

Jamie, the founder of [Whisper Media](#), is a consummate storyteller, capturing companies and business leaders through video. She helps her clients feel comfortable and effectively tell their story, capturing their essence and their message in authentic film that not only engages but creates trust, and long-term, tangible results.

5 UNDERUSED CONTENT TYPES

For Driving Website Traffic and Engagement

By Jay Palter

Whether you work directly with the public or your business sells products or services to other businesses, you're probably looking for ways to attract attention and interest.

Content marketing has become a staple in most businesses' marketing plans. Many businesses are using blog posts, infographics, white papers and webinars to attract prospective customers. Others are producing videos and podcasts to build audiences.

However, with every business creating content to try and attract prospects and move them through their sales funnel, there is a lot of competition these days for people's attention.

As part of my content development work for clients, we've discovered some repeatable concepts that stand out in attracting more attention online. Here's a brief overview of 5 underused content types for attracting attention, traffic and engagement.

1. THE INFLUENCER LIST

Every industry has a select group of influencers and thought leaders who dominate online discussion and attract the very

audience you are seeking. **Think of these folks as the gatekeepers to your target market.** Using some industrial-strength social analytics tools or even your own experience, you can select relevant topics, identify the top online contributors and then publish a list of top influencers to follow.

This type of content attracts a lot attention because it's valuable: it helps your potential customers by pointing out thought leaders in the space; it helps promote influencers who reciprocate by sharing your content in their networks; and all of this helps you and your company build visibility and engagement online. Almost without exception, these influencer lists are among the most popular posts on the sites where we have published them. Here are some sample lists with which we've had success:

- [Digital Transformation influencers](#) for a professional services consulting firm
- [Finserv influencers](#) for an enterprise software company
- [Canadian Finance influencers](#) for a financial software provider
- [Fintech influencers](#), [VC influencers](#), and [AI influencers](#) on my own site

2. THE INFLUENCER COMPILATION ARTICLE

Once you've identified and promoted some of the top influencers in your market space, you can reach out to individuals and get their input on a relevant topic. Distilling this information into an article is a great way to create engaging content that is chock full of value for your target audience. Since the content includes top influencers, they have an incentive to share and promote your content. You can also leverage this type of article to raise the profile of a leader within your business, whether as a contributor or in the byline.

Here's a sample of this kind of influencer compilation article: [BAI's How to get started with AI in your financial institution.](#)

In many cases, the influencers that you wish to include in your compilation article will be very busy and may not be able to respond to your request in a timely manner, or at all. Keep your ask focused and make it easy for influencers to respond. Response rates will improve dramatically if influencers know you, so build relationships with them before asking.

A variation on this type of article is to review existing tweets or blog posts on a topic and compile the best of them into an article that draws out the key insights. Be sure to embed or include screenshots of the tweets and mention the influencers you include with links to their social accounts.

3. THE GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Every industry has its own buzzwords and tech-speak. In many industries, new and innovative technologies are emerging faster than ever and many people are struggling to keep up. Try compiling some of this technical terminology and defining it for your readers using simplified, common language. This kind of helpful reference content displays your knowledge of an emerging space, while offering valuable assistance to clients and prospects.

Here's a sample of this kind of glossary content: [Ticoon's Fintech Terminology that CEOs and Business Leaders Need to Know](#) and [Xtiva's Glossary of Reactive Software Systems.](#)

4. THE TOP READS ARTICLE

In a world of information overload, curated content can be its own thought leadership strategy. A good vehicle for sharing curated content is to feature a handful - say, three to five for the sake of this discussion - of the best reading on a topic with a short summary of each. This type of article can be a recurring post on a blog site or can be incorporated into an email newsletter. Either way, distilling valuable learnings for your target market from the abundance of content being published daily is a great strategy for getting people's attention. One example: [Raghav Sharma's Top Reads.](#)

5. THE EVENT TAKEAWAYS ARTICLE

Your industry, like every industry, has important conferences or exhibitions that are on everyone's radar. But not everyone can always attend. Whether you are attending as a speaker, exhibitor or simply a participant at an important industry event, use your involvement to highlight key takeaways or insights. Act like a reporter and seek out speakers and exhibitors who stand out for you. This kind of content can be very valuable to your target audience, especially for people who wanted to but were unable to attend.

CONCLUSION

There are many content formats that work well and should be part of your content marketing efforts, such as white papers, guides, webinars, infographics and "how to" posts, just to name a few. However, by focusing on and engaging with existing influencers and thought leaders within your industry and developing lesser-used content types that highlight insights from influencers and observations about your industry, your content can find its target audience more effectively.



Jay Palter

Jay is a digital strategist and leading expert on influence outreach and engagement. Working directly with clients on strategy and content, Jay provides creative, customized systems that draw audiences in a marketplace that is tired of being sold, creating the connection and alignment that businesses use as the foundation of their growth and sustainability.

INFLUENCER ENGAGEMENT

Boost Your Marketing and PR Efforts

By Jay Palter

Social media networks have come to play an important role in the marketing and public relations activities of most businesses. Social networks have also given rise to a new breed of digital influencers and audience aggregators who can be very helpful to you and your business – if you know how to work with them.

In this section, I will explain how a strategic approach to influencer outreach and engagement can help you and your business gain visibility and authority, and build industry relationships that will help you achieve your objectives.

WHAT IS AN ONLINE INFLUENCER?

Let's start with a basic definition: an online influencer is a person who has built up their own visibility and authority on a particular topic in online social networks. Influencers have amassed large and/or highly targeted online followings and have earned some authority for their efforts. Virtually anyone can be (or become) an online influencer; journalists, industry analysts, business leaders, academics, and bloggers can become influential in whatever niche they belong to. In short,

an online influencer is a person with subject matter expertise that others pay attention to in online social networks.

NOW, WHAT IS INFLUENCER OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT?

You may have heard of the term “influencer marketing” in a mass-market, consumer product context. That's when you find a celebrity with millions of social media followers to share a picture of herself/himself enjoying your product. You might ask - and pay - for their endorsement, often through an agency. That's exactly what I'm **not** talking about.

Most small and medium-sized businesses aren't marketing to the masses. If you've gone through the process of writing out a business plan and identifying your target market, then you know who these people are. Chances are, the segments you're trying to reach are currently being influenced by a set of people - influencers - who typically are not celebrities, but rather subject matter experts who have managed to build an online following around their personality and expertise.

Outreach and engagement to these non-celebrity online influencers typically involves a common set of activities.

- **First**, we need to identify influential people with authority and reach in our target market. This can be tricky to do, depending on the industry and the narrowness of the niche.
- **Second**, we need to begin networking and building relationships with these people through social networks.
- **And third**, through these relationships and interactions, we communicate our brand value story.

The best approach, gleaned from years of first-hand experience, is precisely **not** to market and pitch to influencers, but instead to build relationships and nurture engagement with them over time. That's because influencers are not our target market – they are the gatekeepers to our target market. We want influencers to be aware of our product or service offering, recognize its value and communicate its benefits to their networks. We want the influencer's influence, not their business.

WHY INFLUENCER OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT ISN'T TYPICALLY DONE WELL

Influencer relations, as I have described above, is a relatively new concept. It is not well understood or implemented by traditional PR and marketing firms, for a variety of reasons:

- PR and marketing firms tend to focus on corporate brands, whereas influencer outreach and engagement is best leveraged through people and individually-led social networking and engagement activities. In order to succeed,

we need an individual business leader to take the lead and we need to support that person in direct personal outreach to and engagement of influencers – a departure from traditional brand-based PR and marketing work.

- PR and marketing firms tend to excel at pitching stories to professional media organizations or buying advertising – and influencer outreach and engagement is neither of these. Online influencers are **not** professional media people; they are subject matter experts, consultants, vendors, academics, or people who are simply interested in a given topic or industry. Influencers are often less open to traditional marketing and PR approaches because their motivations for being active online are different: they are online to stay informed and learn from their peers – other influencers – and share this knowledge with their audience. Credibility is key to the online influencers' status.
- Social networks and online communities are based on mutual benefit and adding of value. People gain authority, audience, and influence by adding value to the community and promoting other members of the community – not promoting themselves. PR and marketing firms are hired specifically to promote their clients; they don't excel when the main mode of engagement is promoting others.

INFLUENCER OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT DONE RIGHT

Effective influencer outreach and engagement programs can build visibility and thought leadership, and contribute

positively to a company's bottom line, when they are built on the following strategic activities.

1. CONTINUOUSLY IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET INFLUENCERS

Start by using social analytics tools to identify your target influencer group. Selecting who you should focus on is a subjective activity, but there are a variety of data-driven tools and online resources you can use to reveal key candidates. If you have knowledge of a target market, you can ask other influential people in the market space who they pay attention to. It doesn't take long to compile a list of top influencers. Listening for insights and iterating your target influencer list is the best way to stay current.

2. CONTRIBUTE VALUE TO THE INFLUENCER COMMUNITY

Influencer outreach and engagement is more akin to personal networking than anything else. It's certainly not marketing, which is why you need to be wary of "influencer marketing" tools and strategies. Influencers are not our target clients; it's their trust and influence we want. The best way to build this trust and attract influencers is to promote them by curating and sharing their content and insights. Participate in industry

discussions online, attend community events and conferences and be seen to be a supporter of the community and its members. And always strive to create (and share) valuable content that informs and helps others in the community.

3. TAKE A LONG-TERM VIEW TO BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH INFLUENCERS

It is said, "it's not what you know, but who you know", in business. Real relationships drive real business results and social networks offer many opportunities to develop better relationships with influencers. Start by taking a long view of influencer outreach and engagement; after all, these are influential people in your industry with large audiences in your target market and you want their long-term respect, not one tweet or mention.

Get to know these influencers as people because business is also personal – find the ones you like, seek common ground and build trust. This approach will take you a long way to earning the right to ask influencers for their help. And when you do it right, you won't even need to ask for help in many situations – it will be offered.



Jay Palter

Jay is a digital strategist and leading expert on influence outreach and engagement. Working directly with clients on strategy and content, Jay provides creative, customized systems that draw audiences in a marketplace that is tired of being sold, creating the connection and alignment that businesses use as the foundation of their growth and sustainability.

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

From the Admin Slayer blog

In today's fast-paced business environment, using time efficiently is of the utmost importance - so we love anything that saves us time and energy - especially in social media.

For those new to or skeptical of social media, it's a great way to keep in touch and engaged in your community. Social media is for providing value, delivering customer service, and being accessible.

What social media *isn't* (or shouldn't be used for), is a marketing tool directed at making sales. However, by being engaged and participating in the conversations that clients, partners, and others are already having, you are strengthening your position and increasing your visibility, which (in our opinion) is key to long-term success.

Now, you may be thinking, "Between back-to-back calls and meetings each day, I'm lucky to find the time to check and reply to emails! How am I supposed to find the time to make social media posts to a variety of sites, too?!"

We hear you. That's where the following apps (we did say we love things that save time and energy) come in.

HOOTSUITE

If the thought of daily posting to social media is daunting, this may be the tool for you. Hootsuite allows you to schedule posts in advance to save you time throughout the week. Having a time dedicated to social media will enable you to prep and schedule posts for future times when you know you will be too busy. Conversely, for those who work better on the fly, you can schedule future posts whenever a free moment presents itself.

BUFFER

If you like the sound of Hootsuite but need a little more, then Buffer might be for you. Buffer allows you to schedule posts in advance, just like Hootsuite, but will also analyze your audience and recommend the best times to post, while keeping your funnel full of a steady stream of content. These additional features are why we recently switched from Hootsuite to Buffer.

MENTION

Have you ever felt like people are all talking about you? Mention will let you know if your paranoia is warranted. Mention monitors not only social media but also the rest of the

web for mentions of your brand. If someone's talking about you, you get an alert. You can even integrate it with [Slack](#), so the notifications show up right in your channel. Don't use Slack? We do, and we love it.

[LITTLE BIRD](#)

While this tool is expensive, it can be worth subscribing to in order to get a handle on the influencers in your niche. By

entering keywords and other information, you can uncover influencers and the communities they are influential in.

Now that you know the tools you need, go forth and connect!!

And remember: "Automate content, not engagement." Conversations mean liking other posts and interacting with social media users, which may mean a little "people power" will be necessary.

HANDY WEBSITE TOOLS

For the Busy Entrepreneur

From the Admin Slayer blog

Whether you hire a pro to create your website or decide to build your own, it helps to know what tools are available. Here are just a few suggestions to get you started.

WORDPRESS

There are two different WordPress platforms available online - [Wordpress.com](https://www.wordpress.com) is a fully managed website solution, and [Wordpress.org](https://www.wordpress.org) is open-source software that you can use to create a fully customized website. The .com version offers more than 350 eye catching and fully customizable drag-and-drop themes, perfect for any type of business.

[Themeforest](https://www.themeforest.net) offers more than 30,000 templates for wordpress.org sites. Both platforms are responsible for “powering 27% of the internet today”, and allow users to have their own custom, ad-free domains. Sites are optimized for SEO and social sharing, as well as mobile and desktop. Each site includes an automatic backup system and built-in anti-spam tools, plus offers ample storage for documents, videos, and photos. If you want a site that allows you to do it all, WordPress won't disappoint.

SQUARESPACE.COM

Originally launched from a dorm room in Maryland, Squarespace has been used by millions of users to create customizable sites with top-of-the-line security, enterprise-grade infrastructure, and around-the-clock support.

Each site comes with free, unlimited hosting, [affordable domains](#), built-in integrations with Adobe Creative Cloud Image Editor, Google Apps, Getty Images, professional email (with the purchase of an annual plan), unlimited product inventory, straightforward merchandising tools, and more.

Unlike Wordpress, Squarespace only offers a fully-managed product, which is what allows them to claim such high security standards. But you can still use your own custom domain, which you don't need to buy through Squarespace - you can use GoDaddy or any other registrar / hosting company.

P.S. Admin Slayer's site is built on this platform and we think it's pretty amazing!

[WIX.COM](https://www.wix.com)

This web design platform used by 90 million people in 180 countries is feature-rich, with countless options, including widgets and innovative apps. Sites are optimized for mobility, provide secure hosting, offer 24/7 full support and are SEO-friendly. Wix is also the only drag-and-drop building platform with HTML5 capabilities. It's the perfect platform for beginners with no experience - or interest - in coding.

[WEEBLY.COM](https://www.weebly.com)

Like Wix, Weebly is a great platform if you're looking for ease of use and just need a basic site with limited flexibility. The site's powerful drag-and-drop builder guides you through each step from beginning to end without any need for coding. It's a great platform for managing inventory, tracking orders, and handling taxes.

[Advanced tools](#) include real time shipping, abandoned cart tracking and handling, coupons, and multiple currencies. Built-in email marketing tools integrate perfectly with your site and store, and SEO tools help increase your organic ranking.

[SHOPIFY.COM](https://www.shopify.com)

Designed specifically with e-commerce in mind, Shopify provides users with complete control over the look and feel of their online store, with access to hundreds of [attractive themes](#).

You can add new sales channels in seconds, manage unlimited products and inventory, fulfill orders in a single step, and track sales and growth trends. If you're looking for a platform that handles everything from marketing and payments to secure checkout and shipping, Shopify is a great option.

Whatever platform you decide to use, having a web presence for your business is incredibly important, especially if you don't have a physical storefront.

P.S. Need free, high-quality images for your website? No, you can't just use any images you find on the internet (unless you want to risk being sued under copyright laws). Try these websites: [Unsplash](#), [Pexels](#), and [Pixabay](#). The images on these sites are designated 'Creative Commons Zero' (CC0), meaning you can use them however you like, even for commercial purposes.

PART 7: PRODUCTIVITY + EFFICIENCY

Quality Control Tips	126
Project Management Software	129
Music Apps to Help You Focus.....	131
Writing Tools.....	133
Social Bookmarking.....	134
Spreadsheet Apps	136



Oh man, we love this topic. SO much. Maximizing individual productivity is a religion at Admin Slayer. Improving efficiency is a science. Taking those two pieces and molding them together for the highest possible level of effectiveness is our bliss. We're not even a little bit kidding.

You may know that Admin Slayer was created because we needed it. We needed a team working at top level effectiveness in order to support our own businesses. We want everyone to have the resources they need at the exact time that they need them, because success is the only option. Right? Right.

If you're a regular [newsletter reader](#) then you know that every single month we come out with a summary of those productivity tools and applications that we love. Here's the collection thus far, just for you.

QUALITY CONTROL TIPS

The Little Things Matter

From the Admin Slayer blog

Errors. Mistakes. Using the wrong 'there'. Misplaced decimal points. Misspelled names. Those little gaffes have the power to make you blush with shame and cringe at the memory, even years after the fact. Typos, poor usage and incorrect spelling may all seem like small things. It may seem nit-picky and pointless to go over each individual letter of your written work - you just want to get the word out and *fast!*

The reality, however, is that you won't get that interview if there are typos in your resume. You won't get that promotion if your boss can't trust you to send professional emails. And you certainly won't win that client if they get the sense that you don't have sufficient attention to detail. **The worst part? They'll probably never tell you why.**

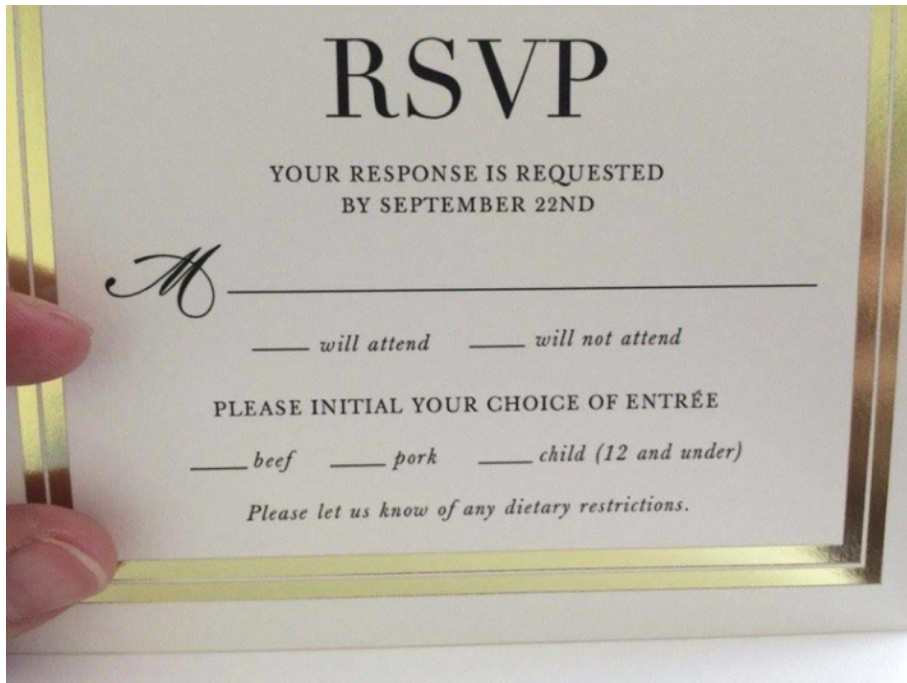
Unfortunately, nobody cares that you were up late with too much work and unreasonable deadlines. They don't know. That information doesn't arrive with your output - and you wouldn't want it to. What they **do** care about, and what they understand is the message you are sending, which is: **"This wasn't important enough for me to check thoroughly."** and by extension...**"YOU are not important enough for me to double check what I send you."** Ouch.



A Slayer personally took this photo in February. She was not going to a "raggae" fest.

"THE WAY WE DO ANYTHING IS THE WAY WE DO EVERYTHING"

- Martha Beck



You could be internet famous, like this couple who apparently offered small children as a menu item at their wedding.

HOW TO KEEP THE LITTLE THINGS FROM TURNING INTO BIG THINGS

- Know your weaknesses. You can't fix what you're not aware of. Ask someone you work with to tell you the honest truth.
- If you struggle with dyslexia, ADD, or a learning disability, make sure you've got the systems and support to keep these challenges from getting in your way.
- Use the tools. Spell check exists: use it¹⁸.
- Slow down, especially if you're prone to making mistakes when you rush. Draft your email and save it. Go do something else. Read it again before you send it out.
- Get another set of eyes. It is very difficult to proofread your own work. Once you've stared at the same page for several hours, the letters begin to swim. Get a proofreader and make them part of your regular process. All the cool kids do¹⁹.

Nobody's perfect. We're human and mistakes happen.

But don't allow that to become an excuse for putting out terrible work. Professionalism is a message you send every day, with every interaction.

¹⁸ But don't rely on it entirely. Spell check is not a grammar whiz, and can trip on [homonyms, homophones, homographs, and heteronyms](#).

¹⁹ We're pretending to be cool kids right now. Just go with it.



Maybe that will cover the tow charge?



We want you to be famous for the right reasons, and not because you've just accused Rachael Ray of cannibalism.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

From the Admin Slayer blog

We all need a little help from time to time when it comes to staying on the ball and meeting deadlines. Sure, there's always the trusty post-it note or the good old-fashioned paper list but let's face it: when you have what feels like 800 things on your to-do list, paper is not always going to cut it.

That's where a Project Management tool can really come in handy.

Not only will a Project Management tool help make your stress headaches a thing of the past, it can also boost team morale, increase productivity, and keep everyone (including you!) accountable. And with many free options available, there's a perfect fit for every type of business.

See below for some of the most popular Project Management options.

WRIKE

Wrike is a work management software and collaboration platform that enhances communication, transparency, and accountability to achieve results. Perfect for Marketing, Creative, Project Management, and Product Development teams, Wrike allows you to track projects, team performance

and budgets. It additionally provides workload reports and interactive visual timelines along with the ability to set priorities, adjust plans in real time and share files. Free for up to five users, Wrike also offers [Professional, Business, Wrike for Marketers, and Enterprise plans](#) for upwards of \$35 plus per month. All plans offer a free trial.

ASANA

Asana is a straightforward no-frills task and project management tool for teams and businesses of all sizes. It allows you to see the progress of any project with a quick glance, turns conversations into actionable tasks, minimizes email inbox clutter, and tracks just about anything. Not only can you easily assign tasks and then organize them into projects around meetings, initiatives, or programs, you can also customize Asana to match your current workflows, and add relevant files, attachments, due dates and times.

A tiered subscription model, [plan prices](#) are based on the number of people you have in your team or organization. Free for teams up to 15 people, the Premium option costs only \$8.33 per member per month for larger sized teams.

REDBOOTH

A user-friendly online task and project management software perfect for busy teams, Redbooth can easily be linked with your favourite chat, email, and file storage apps, so that you never miss a deadline again. Featuring checklists, templates, powerful productivity reports, a Gantt chart builder, team workspaces, spreadsheet imports, time tracking, and more, Redbooth makes boosting team accountability and increasing productivity a snap. Redbooth is available to [try for free](#) for the

first 30 days with a Pro (\$5 per user/month) or Business option (\$15 per user/month) available.

A quality project management tool can really be your best friend, although it's not always great at holding a conversation. That's where we come in. Not only are we great at helping you stay on that ball, we're also always up for a chat - over the phone or even video conference.

MUSIC APPS TO HELP YOU FOCUS

From the Admin Slayer blog

Do you ever find yourself staring at your computer screen, with no motivation to get your work done? Maybe you're really dreading getting through that pile of paperwork on your desk, or have [a case of the Mondays](#). Let's help you get out of that rut and into a more productive, focused mindset, shall we? How? With music!

Music has been proven to affect our mood. It is often used in marketing and advertising to get us to feel a certain way – think of the commercial with those sad animal eyes and Sarah McLachlan's *In the Arms of an Angel* playing in the background. Tell me that didn't pull at your heartstrings and make you want to grab your wallet to give a donation!?

When we are shopping at the mall, fast paced music is played to get us in the mood to shop and try clothes on quickly. The effect of music on our mood has been researched for many years and there is definitely a link! So why not try using music to help you focus at work?

We polled the Slayers to see what music gets them in the mood to slay their tasks like ninjas! Of course we are all different, so there were some varying responses:

SPOTIFY

This was the most popular program used amongst our team.

It is a free app (although you can upgrade to access their "premium features") that has several playlists to choose from. A few that we recommend to help you focus include *Brain Food*, *Deep Focus*, *Piano in the Background*, *Creativity Boost*, *Whisperings: Solo Piano* and *the Lucifer Soundtrack*.

You can also search for music in the "Genres & Moods" section to find a playlist that best suits your musical taste. Maybe you like to bust a few moves from your office chair to something a little less conventional – no judgement here!

GOOGLE PLAY MUSIC (FORMERLY SONGZA)

This is another popular app similar to Spotify. It has several "radio stations" including *Working from Home*, *Jazz for Working*, *Techno for Working Hard* and *Electronic Focus*. There is a Moods section and separate Genres section on Google Play Music, so you can pick what suits your mood and recommended stations will show up for you – how convenient is that?

SLACKER RADIO

Despite its name, Slacker Radio has its own variety of music to help you get-your-focus-on. You can search through their stations by genre from Alternative to Rock or use their search feature to look for a specific song or album.

If you're a little old fashioned (as one Slayer self-identified), you can always go with your favourite local radio station.

Upgrade to the 21st century by finding your station online and avoid fumbling with a dial to get the perfect sound, and minimal fuzz.

Maybe you really just need to work in silence to maintain your focus and get your work done, and that's alright too! So now you really have no excuse – pick a playlist, a radio station, or the sound of silence and get to it! That pile of paperwork is not getting any smaller...

WRITING TOOLS

From the Admin Slayer blog

Nowadays, the majority of the writing we do is done digitally. Here are some tools to help improve the quality of the writing you do every day.

GRAMMAR POLICE

Want to improve your email writing? [Grammarly](#) is a free Google Chrome extension that works instantly as you type. It helps you eliminate errors, provides synonym suggestions, checks your grammar and more, so you can focus on the content, and feel confident when you're ready to hit "send"!

END THE BORING

Need some new ideas because you've used a word a few too many times or want to spice up your vocabulary? [Power Thesaurus](#) has what you need/desire/require/long for, to keep your readers engaged/engrossed/interested/betrothed²⁰...

STAY ON TASK

Are you writing a book or research paper and want a program that can help you along the journey? [Scrivener](#) is a software program that was designed for writers, by writers. It has a ton

of great features, including keeping track of your research, generating content to prevent writer's block and it allows you to work on your project in any order you choose. This will let you focus on your written content while Scrivener takes care of the rest.

THAT SEO THING

Have a blog with WordPress and need help with Search Engine Optimization? [Yoast](#) is a plugin for WordPress that helps you optimize everything from the content in your pages, to meta descriptions, to breadcrumbs, so you can get more hits and share your ideas with more people on the web.

MAXIMIZE YOUR FLOW

If you have nerves of steel or are simply a masochist, [this one's](#) for you! It's called [The Most Dangerous Writing App](#) for a reason – if you stop typing for more than five seconds, all of your work is lost! Its purpose is to prevent writer's block. You can read more about it [here](#).

Look at that - 5 brand new tools and suddenly you're a content *genius*. Right?

²⁰ Remember that while the thesaurus is your friend, it is an English friend and English friends like to "take the piss". Always check definitions thoroughly before inserting a synonym.

SOCIAL BOOKMARKING

From the Admin Slayer blog

We are simply inundated with information, every moment of the day. From articles, videos, and podcasts you stumble upon in your daily feed to those shared by friends or colleagues, everything is just so interesting! And distracting. "Time management" may be a productivity buzz phrase but today our real problem is "**Focus.**"

Want to avoid having your day thrown off just because something fascinating (and shiny!) just happened to show up? Allotting a specific time for daily reading may be the answer.

Sure, that's easy to say, but you may be thinking "if I don't read it now, I'll never find it again!" Enter Social Bookmarking. These are apps that, at the minimum, provide you with a means to store articles for reading later. Others go a step further and search out content that will truly float your boat. Here are a few popular ones we've explored for you.

POCKET

Pocket is a simple "save for later" application that lets you save and download articles, videos or other tidbits that you encounter while online. Because it's not just a link to an

external article, Pocket is a great choice if you're often offline and wishing you could catch up on your reading.

You will appreciate the efficiency of its clean, text-only reading screen for powering through all that compelling content.

If your social media profile is lacking consistent content, Pocket can easily share your articles to multiple social networks.

INSTAPAPER

Instapaper is another good option for saving and organizing the content you find on the internet. A simple push of a button in your browser, or "share" to Instapaper on your mobile device and that article is saved in your Instapaper app. Like Pocket, these articles can be synced to your device, ready for viewing when you're offline.

The Instapaper app boasts an uncluttered, reading-optimized format on your mobile device that makes reading a pleasure. Social media sharing is also a single button push.

STUMBLEUPON

StumbleUpon is a popular "Content Discovery" tool that helps users find the content they are most interested in. It's also used

to promote content. Through its collaborative filtering, communities with similar interests are created, increasing the likelihood that you will "stumble upon" pages matching your personal interests.

As you create your account, a quick interview will capture 10 topics you are interested in and then begin offering up sites based on this. You can save any discovered links to personal lists that you create, making it quick to find that favourite article later on.

[DELICIOUS.US](#)

Delicious began simply as a Social Bookmarking app but has added Content Discovery to its tool belt. Links to your discoveries are kept online, and organized however you desire.

The more you add, the more Delicious learns your preferences and helps find what you love to read. Their internal search engine is powerful and intuitive so you spend less time searching for that link you saw and more time enjoying the read.

[DIGG](#)

Digg is a Content Discovery app and a Social News Site. As you search for content through Digg, you, and other users, affect the popularity of articles and how they are offered. This site is popular for bloggers wanting to increase traffic to their blogs. As a Social Bookmarking tool, it provides a means to search the internet for anything you are interested in and will save the links for reading later in a similar fashion to Delicious and StumbleUpon.

SPREADSHEET APPS

From the Admin Slayer blog

If you're like us, you probably can't imagine living life without Microsoft Excel. So we thought we would take a look at some of the latest productivity apps out there.

AIRTABLE

This collaborative group app allows you to organize everything from projects to customers and even ideas. It is straightforward like a spreadsheet but with the power of a database. In addition to allowing for number and text entry, Airtable also has rich field types (checkboxes, drop downs, notes, links to other tables, and drag and drop file attachments).

FIELDBOOK

Fieldbook helps business teams get their operations out of spreadsheets and allows anyone to create a custom database in minutes. Columns and rows can be quickly entered and then linked to Clients, Projects, Candidates and Roles, or Tasks and Owners in just seconds. Data can easily be filtered by Status or Priority, saved, and then shared with team members.

AWESOME TABLE

When you want to take the content of your Google Sheet to the next level, this is the app for you. Available as a gadget for

Google sites and as a web app, Awesome Table can take a simple Google Sheet and turn it into a directory, Gantt chart, Google Map, cards, and more. You can add filters and styles to customize the view and then implement the views on your website.

IMPROVADO

This app saves you the headache of having to aggregate all your marketing and advertising data into one report by automating the process via Google Sheets and delivering all your client data in one sheet. Features include detailed campaign financial reports, percentage change over time charts, and campaign-level, Adset level, and keyword level reports.

QUIP SPREADSHEETS

This app turns spreadsheets on their head, making them not only easy to use but also very flexible and more social than ever before. Teams can stay connected through an integrated approach to their data sharing on everyday tasks like budgets, tables, and project plans. Quip Spreadsheets support formulas, over 400 functions, and all the data formatting options you'll ever need.

CLOSING

Working With a Virtual Assistant139

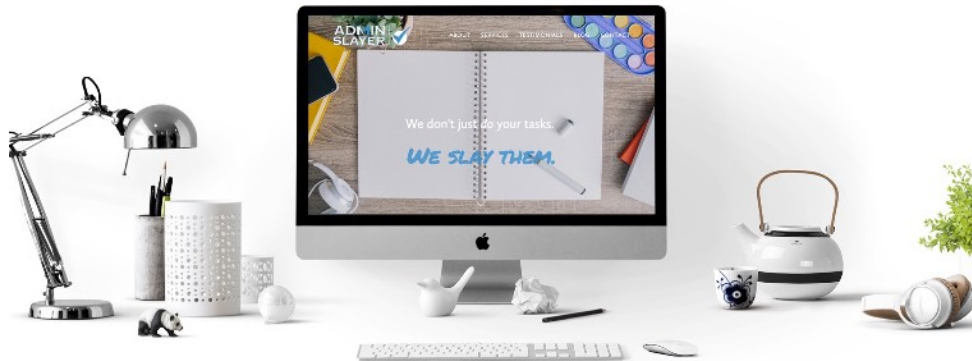
Okay, seriously though, how great was that? We're still amazed by our fantastic contributors - their willingness to lend you a little support with their expertise, and the high quality of that expertise.

You may be overwhelmed with the quantity of information you've just ingested, and we expected that. That's the reason we've given you a [workbook](#) to go along with this.

Now, after you've read everything, go on back to the beginning. Remind yourself which pieces you really liked, and the actions you'd like to take from them. Write those actions in your Workbook. Share your notes - and this ebook - with your team and the strategic partners you'll be working with to see those actions through. [Share them with us!](#)

Create a map. What actions will you tackle, in what order, and who will help you? If we're lucky enough to have you as a client, tap your Slayer to create that road map for you, plot it on your calendar, and start project managing your future.

Ask for the help you need. Our contributors are experts at what they do. If you see their contact information at the



bottom of their article, that's because they're open to you reaching out to them and are ready to help out. Get in touch.

Get in touch with us too. Email us with your best productivity app recommendations or suggestions for articles - we'll add them to our to do list.

If you're not working with us yet, because you don't know how or why, or because you think you can't afford us, we want you to listen up - to the CEO of [Crisp Media](#) and our inspiration for this ebook. Christine wrote the following article of her own volition in June 2017. We were intensely flattered, grateful, and deeply motivated to build on it to create this ebook of survivor skills for you, our favourite kind of people.



WORKING WITH A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

By Christine Pilkington

I'm in love. With my virtual assistant – or VA. I actually don't know how I'd ever survive without her. I suppose it's cliché to be in love with your assistant, but in my case, I've never met her in real life. Besides, my husband loves her too (see point number 7, below).

It started innocently enough. I had a small, temporary task – posting a job description, sorting through resumes and booking interviews – and I had no time (this is why I was hiring in the first place). A VA made sense and I thought I'd spend about \$400 all in. And Shannon Cassidy's team at [Admin Slayer](#) was up for the task.

About nine months later, I'm still working with them. After the initial briefing, it became clear that there were other administrative tasks that were weighing me down. As time wore on, Jen, my assigned VA, started taking more and more work off my plate, freeing me up to do things essential to my business – closing sales, overseeing the growth of my business, and just generally having more time to breathe.

[Here are some of the tasks.](#)

1. CALENDAR MANAGEMENT

I can't tell you how freeing it is to not have to deal with the back-and-forth of booking meetings with people. Sure, your

internal team can use the meeting availability function built right into your calendar platform. But for clients and other external people, there is an unbelievable amount of drain here.

[In a previous post](#), I mentioned using booking software. Personally, I think it works only in specific cases. When you're trying to get a meeting in with one of your clients, particularly one you're trying to woo in the sales cycle, soft hands are sometimes needed. Sending them to a link to select a time for them to book themselves seems utterly impersonal – as if I'm saying “take a number”. Jen personalizes the process, plus follows up if she hasn't heard back. She'll even book restaurant reservations and organize meeting rooms - all I need to do is show up at the appointed time.

2. MILEAGE TRACKING

Each month, Jen goes into my calendar and looks at the various places I've had meetings. She then logs them into a mileage-tracking sheet and then creates a journal entry in my bookkeeping software. When you factor in the savings on taxes, this alone pays for itself. Plus I don't have the headache of needing to think about it at year-end. Because who has time to pull together their mileage throughout the year?

3. ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

Everyone has customers who are slow to pay. For a business owner who works directly with clients, it can be tough being bright and chipper one day and then demanding payment the next. Jen flawlessly plays bad cop, making the task purely about business, leaving me to play good cop. As someone not deep in the client relationship, she can ask for the payment without making it personal.

4. ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

The account management, especially on the media side of our business, can be very intense. There is a lot of back and forth trying to get creative assets from our clients, plus managing dates. I previously had this task assigned to another person but it became clear that the skill sets of “doing the job” and “coordinating the job” were too challenging to merge together. I created a process that was easy for Jen to follow, including email scripts, folder structures, naming conventions and more. Now, everything is organized and my clients know exactly what’s required. Jen consistently follows up, keeping our workflow moving, and she reaches out to me whenever she needs any help. As we scale up our [Facebook Campaign services](#), Jen will be essential here.

This approach would also work nicely if you needed someone to actively manage inbound customer service queries.

5. OUTBOUND SALES

Having Jen help me with outbound sales came as a surprise. If you have a relatively repeatable process around outbound sales, a VA can work wonders. I had Jen come up with a list of prospects for a specific niche we wanted to target. The list came from our existing database as well as doing some research online. She then emailed the contacts through our CRM, as well as created deals and assigned activities within our system, assigning each to me with a due date.

Once the sale was closed, we followed our Account Management process. Based on the sales generated, Admin Slayer's services paid for itself eight times over.

6. ANY REPEATABLE TASKS

One of our clients required a particular email update every other week. It could not be late because it was forwarded to the company’s CEO, but it also required inputs from various people on the project team. I create a “mad libs” style template for her, which she would populate once she received the inputs. She would also follow up with the team if the inputs were late. She then presented it to me for my final review and I sent it along to my client. By assigning this to my VA, this task was never late.

7. SAVING YOUR MARRIAGE

I haven’t limited my VA’s tasks to my business. I forward my kids’ soccer calendars (there are three to manage!) to Jen and she inputs the practices and games in a Google calendar I

share with my husband, including details like who the opposing team is and buffer time for us to show up early for warm up. She inputs all the information on my kids' pro-d days and hot lunch days. She even watches out for days that my husband is out of town (this is also in our calendar) and knows when I need to cover off days when he normally does school drop off and pick up.

So is it all worth it? 100% yes. My payroll has dropped significantly (even though Admin Slayer charges a premium

rate) and I've been more free to build more business - the combined effect has more than paid for their services. The quality of the work is top notch and because she's a contractor, the delivery of service is extremely high - I rarely need to correct what she's done. And don't let the premium rate deter you. If you were to go with a less expensive VA (I've done this) or one that's overseas (I've tried this too), it will undoubtedly come back and bite you. You absolutely get what you pay for.



Christine Pilkington

Christine is the CEO and Founder of [Crisp Media](#), your ally in marketing strategy, content, and execution. This award winning entrepreneur has provided consulting services to large companies such as AOL, BMW, MINI, Indigo and RadioShack, as well as some of Canada's top media brands, like Macleans, CityTV, and Today's Parent. A dedicated parent, it's clear that Christine believes that parenthood and business don't need to stifle each other, delivering the annual outstanding [Leading Moms](#) event in Vancouver, and providing parenting expertise to GlobalTV, National Post, CBC Radio, and more.

ABOUT US

We began in 2015 with a dream that we could provide small businesses with the tools and team they need to jumpstart their success, while at the same time providing the most amazing remote workplace and lifestyle for the incredibly talented professionals who are the backbone of any good business. Ever had a dream come true? That's Admin Slayer.

We're a growing team of professional administrators and bookkeepers from across Canada, led by a couple of mind-blowing, business-saving administrators, an efficiency and marketing expert, and a business and finance professional. We have the tools and the team you need to build a fan-freaking-tastic business. **Come check us out at www.adminslayer.com.**

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