

So, You Want to Start at Business?

Written by Jamie Wolf

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Dynamic Development: No Static At All

Develop Yourself, Part 3 of 6

Life is not static. Whether you are actively engaged - in learning, getting healthy, bettering yourself or the lives of those around you - or you are completely disengaged, the clock is ticking, the world is changing, and life is moving inexorably forward to an endpoint.

Each of us will come to that end even though we don't know when. Likewise, your business is dynamic, never static. If you are not consciously making choices to further its development, then it is in decline – even if not in a noticeable (yet) fashion. That does not mean you must always be in growth mode relative to size; it's fine to stay a small business. Just be aware that to have a vibrant, healthy business you must consciously choose the outcomes and results you want and then develop your business, and yourself as its leader, in order for the market to continue to see your product or service as relevant.

Here are 12 essentials to focus on to help you do just that!

1. Keep score. Know your daily, weekly, monthly numbers and financial trends, know the difference between your cash flow and your profit, and know what it costs to retain a customer and acquire a new customer.
2. Set goals and objectives. Track and measure your progress towards reaching them.
3. Be effective with your marketing, carefully allocating funds for the greatest impact.
4. Improve your public speaking so that you master giving a powerful business presentation – and know your audience so that you target what is essential for them to hear.

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5. Monitor trends in the economy and in your particular industry sector so that you aren't blindsided by a significant shift in your business' landscape.
6. Sharpen your selling skills, your own and your employees'. Remember, there are only 4 ways to change your bottom line: get more customers, lose fewer customers, sell more things more often to your customers, and increase margins per sale (ie raise your prices.) Improving sales – whether it's shortening the sales' cycle or decreasing the cost to acquire a new customer (whether that customer is an individual consumer or a large company or contract) is one of the most significant ways to positively affect your bottom line.
7. Carefully nurture your 'corporate' culture even if you are a one-person show. Be intentional in developing your company so that it is a place you enjoy working, it has the integrity you respect in other companies, it is a steward of the environment and it is a good community citizen. When you motivate employees or yourself by consciously allocating time or resources for volunteer efforts, continuing education, family events, and sourcing locally, you create loyal employees and customers.
8. Manage your resources carefully, especially your time. Be sure to get daily, weekly, and quarterly breaks from your business to rejuvenate, find your creativity, and acquire perspective for improved decision-making.
9. Prepare effectively. Each evening spend some time visualizing your upcoming day, not only what needs to get done but how you want to feel about the day. When you bring cheerful, positive, confident energy to your day it can be felt by everyone you interact with and they will return that energy to you.
10. Have accountability partners or mastermind groups. Nobody succeeds alone. Everyone has missteps. When you share your experiences with others it helps you maintain perspective. When you publicly claim your intentions to your group, you are more likely to honor your commitment. Finally, when you cheer others on through their ups and downs you are rewarded beyond measure.
11. Collaborate. Barter. Find ways to joint venture; promote others, share the revenue, and ask them to do the same for you. Find products and services that complement what you offer so that you can provide your customers with a complete package that makes their lives easier.
12. Make communication a priority! Communicate with yourself – this requires slowing down enough for regular and honest assessments of how you feel and whether business is going the way you want it to. If not, look internally for the reasons before you look to external causes. Next, communicate with any employees or contractors you have. This often requires more listening than talking! When your employees are truly part of your team and your processes, they are vested in the outcome. Communicate with your customers through newsletters, social media, regular emails, use of focus groups, and events to thank them. Finally, communicate with your peers. There is a lot that can be shared and learned even from competitors. One way to do this is to list 10-15 things essential to your business. Decide the core handful that can't be shared or discussed. The rest may be issues that others in your industry have found ways to deal with effectively; they can share what they've learned and you can return the favor. Think of the saying "A rising tide floats all boats," and figure out how to help grow the market for all of you.

Remind yourself frequently to seek balance. All work, and no play, isn't healthy for you or for

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those you care about. Seek to excel in all you do without demanding perfection. Embrace change. Developing your business demands that you be willing to develop yourself. Create processes, keep learning, and give back. Understand that you and your business are ALWAYS a work-in-progress and you never arrive. Life is about the journey. Get used to being tested. Know that when things are really uncomfortable it's a sign of growth. Finally, as noted, life and business aren't static. When you're feeling satisfied and comfortable with the status quo be alert to complacency; now more than ever it's time for you, as the head of your business, to develop yourself. When you do, you'll not only get the results you want, you'll enjoy setting your next targets, and the ones beyond those, and developing ways to achieve them with dynamic engagement!

Beaufort resident Jamie Wolf is the author of 'Start Over! Start Now! Ten Keys to SUCCESS in Business and Life' and ten accompanying guidebooks. ☐ If you're ready to be Master of your Fate and Captain of your Soul, she invites you to come on board! Jamie offers online courses and coaching for entrepreneurs and people interested in starting over or in starting their own business. Visit her at <http://www.thestartover.com>

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