



Stop washing the bottles

Learning how to delegate to others, and using the time to focus on adding real value to your business is a psychological challenge for many business owners. But if you don't do it, says **Greg Chapman**, then the business is condemned to be an underperformer.

THE BIGGEST ISSUE in business is not failure — all disappear sooner or later. It's that they stay small. Analysis of ABS figures show only two per cent leave the micro-business bubble, with the rest remaining micros, or Micro-Stayers. While there's many reasons why businesses become Micro-Stayers, one of the most important is that the business can't survive without its owner being there every day. That is, it is a job, not a business.

In a typical business, the owners consider themselves to be the chief cook and bottle washer and wear the label as a badge of pride. They tend to do everything, even if they have staff. They may have tried delegating, but end up doing most the work themselves. They say: "If I give the work to others, they mess it up. It's quicker if I do it myself." They become micro-managers, and find they can't find and keep staff. So they end up doing most things in their business, which ensures the business remains small.

Business owners need to learn what brain surgeons know. When they operate on a patient, they are not in charge of the operating theatre — this is the responsibility of the theatre nurse. Brain surgeons don't open up the patient, or close. They leave that to a junior surgeon. Everything is prepared for them, and someone else mops up the blood from the floor later. All they do is the brain surgery, and some marketing beforehand (client needs), and marketing afterwards (client satisfaction).

How is this possible?

Hospitals have very sophisticated systems, and everyone is highly trained in their use. There are checks and counter-checks. Nothing is left to chance. The very expensive surgeon — the most highly trained person in the theatre — only does what he or she has been trained to do. They don't waste their time doing jobs others can do. In other words they don't spend dollar time on penny jobs.

Business owners need to understand where the real brain surgery is in their business — that is, the part of their job that is most valuable to their business. Examples of brain surgery in your business are: the marketing of your business and the relationships with your key customers. Not data entry or bookkeeping. The challenge for business owners is to identify what part of their role is brain surgery. Theoretically, everything else can and should be delegated or outsourced. This way you can spend more time working on your business.

A great theory, but how can you make this happen in the real world? — the answer is business systems. When you delegate or outsource to someone, you need to document what the person will receive and what they will return to you, complete with standards and the form in which they will provide it to you. This takes some work, but for a small investment in your time, the dividends are huge.

The theatre nurse does not know how to do brain surgery, but they know

before the operation, what equipment the surgeon will need, and when they will need it. They will also know how to prepare the theatre and the patient. Detailed procedures will have been developed so everyone in the theatre will know their role, and the brain surgeon will have optimised his or her time doing what they have been specifically trained to do.

While many people understand the need for systems, they still insist they continue to do things themselves. I had a builder client who spent up to an hour a day ferrying plans around town. I asked him why he didn't use a courier. His answer was: "Couriers cost money." I had a colleague who would regularly go to pick up mail at his post office box, rather than have it sent to his home address. That would take him potentially an hour or two a week. He was trying to save on the redirection cost.

In each case, the business owner placed no value on their time. If they really thought that their time was of equal value to the time of a courier, why not get a job as a courier? They would also be able to sleep a lot easier at night. Neither of these people considered that alternative as a realistic option, as they believed they could make much more in their business than being a courier. Yet they did take on the job as a courier in their own business. They had not put a value on their time.

Valuing your time

So what other jobs are you doing in your business that can be done by someone else? Do you do your own books? ▶

Most small business owners do. They spend hours on something they hate and at which they are not very good. They make mistakes, which they then pay an accountant to fix. While they do this, they are not talking to their customers, or out there finding new ones, but they think they are saving themselves money. Even if you are good at the books, do you want to be known as the owner with a great set of books, or as the owner who spends more time with their customers?

Here are two ways you can value your time. The first is a method with which all business owners should feel comfortable. If you were not doing the non-brain surgery, what would you be doing? Providing a service to a greater number of clients? Making more sales? How much money could you be making if you gave these tasks to someone else? How much an hour could you be making?

Now the second way to value your time — this method is for entrepreneurs. Don't you believe that if you had just an extra two hours a week to actually work *on* your business for one year, rather than *in* it, that your business would be transformed? How much is that time worth? Let's say you had a goal to add \$100,000 to the bottom line of your business in the next 12 months, which you would achieve by spending two hours a week working on your business by educating yourself, creating strategies, planning, and implementing systems. Two hours a week, for a year — to earn an extra \$100,000. Don't you believe you would achieve that goal if you used that time in that way?

If you did, your time would be worth \$1000 per hour! That's how an entrepreneur would value their time. Do you think it is worth the effort now to put systems in your business and delegate to others? Can you afford to pay others

to do the low value work you are doing yourself? Can you afford someone to show you how to do all this?

When you know where the brain surgery is in your business, and place a value on your time, you will be able to leverage yourself. You will spend more time with your customers, and more time working on your business, rather than in it. Ultimately, you will have a business that runs without you. ●



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