



EARN MORE, WORK LESS, ENJOY LIFE

Topic: Got the “Business Owner Blues”?

Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.

For many business owners, in as little as two to three years (and regardless of the level of financial success achieved), the entrepreneurial dream of freedom, independence and wealth has warped into a partial nightmare. The wish to be master of their destiny has degenerated into them being a slave to their business, their employees and their customers. The fire in their belly has been replaced by a growing uneasiness in their gut.

Does this describe you at all?

Habitually, many of you are still working too many hours, wearing too many hats, and handling too many things. As your business has grown, your fun and fulfillment have not. In fact, most of you suffer from the generalized feelings of anxiety, mental fatigue, and of being trapped in the business. For sake of simplicity, I have termed these feelings, **the business owner blues**.

For years, you have deluded yourself. You kept telling yourself that one day you would get caught up, slow down, and have more free time to do other things. That the “blues” would eventually fade. In reality, the sixty to seventy hour workweeks continue. The stress continues. You can’t even escape the business for a few relaxing, no-work days. You still scramble like a hyperactive squirrel preparing for a harsh winter.

Furthermore, you are coming to realize that being a workaholic, micromanager, control freak, dictator or hands-on technician does not work and is a miserable way to run a business, much less lead a life. Working harder, acting tougher, or being more involved with daily details is not the path to greater freedom, joy, or peace-of-mind. Rather, it is a guaranteed path to burn out.

How did you get to this point? Odds are, you were a gifted technician (programmer, electrician, painter, landscaper, CPA, mechanic, chef, attorney, carpenter, salesperson, etc.) who caught the “entrepreneurial bug” several years ago and started, acquired or inherited a business – one that mirrors your technical skills and experience. Now, as you try frantically to maintain control of your growing company, you are likely over-worked, overwhelmed and suffering from a full-blown case of the “business owner blues”. You

feel like a prisoner to your business. As it grows, you work harder and become deeper enslaved. The work, the problems, and the company revolve around you.

If you are honest, business ownership is probably quite different from what you expected and from what you have been prepared to handle. If not held in check, the very strengths that made you a successful technician (detail orientation, hands-on doer, technical expertise, day-to-day focus, etc.) can be real liabilities to you as a business owner.

Technical expertise alone is never sufficient to build and manage a healthy and profitable business. You must provide the vision and leadership of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the order and systems of a Manager. You must get strategic to get free! You must learn to focus on the entire business, not merely the technical work of the business. You must elevate your mindset.

For example, being a good plumber contrasted with creating and operating a successful plumbing business are two different worlds and sets of challenges. Each role requires very different mindsets and skillsets. To be effective, the latter requires strategic leadership; the former requires technical “doer-ship”. Just because you know how to do the daily technical work of plumbing doesn’t qualify you to design, build and manage a business that does the work of plumbing. This is a fatal assumption most would-be entrepreneurs make.

If you are a technician masquerading as an owner, be warned! Your pipes may burst. You have the wrong perspective and are doing the wrong type of work. Because you are comfortable with and good at doing the technical work (for example, plumbing), by default and out of habit, as your company grows, you will end up doing more and more plumbing work. You will find it hard to escape the frantic pace. Soon, the business will have you and your life held hostage. You will forever be trapped under the sink or hovering over a broken toilet. Why? Because your business is broken too! You are not functioning as a strategic business owner.