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OUTSOURCING / MENTAL HEALTH

# HOW TO GET STARTED IN BUSINESS

IF YOU'RE STARTING  
A NEW BUSINESS,  
CONSIDER THIS  
YOUR ESSENTIAL  
GUIDE



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# Introduction

When I first started in business, I had one goal: to build a business that would allow me to live my life the way I wanted. In particular, the freedom of how I spend every day, who I spend every day with, and the opportunity to make an impact in this world of ours.

Along the way, I have acquired companies, assembled leadership teams, and established successful businesses from scratch across multiple sectors. When I look back at the start of that journey, I realised that I did not have something that has made every new venture so much easier; that one thing was information. And, more importantly, information that could help me reliably find the answers to my growth challenges.

So, I reached out to the Shifties Community to help me build an asset designed to give people a head start when they first enter the world of business. This book is that asset.

Welcome to the Shifties Business Essentials eBook; created by business owners for business owners. This vital resource has been written and compiled to help resolve the persistent challenges for those just starting out in business: where to begin and what to prioritise.

The bottom line is: business shouldn't be over-complicated, and getting the basics nailed early on will lay the perfect foundations for success. You can then focus on the day-to-day activities and progressive actions, such as networking, strategising and business development, that can make a difference and increase the number of opportunities in your chosen marketplace.

This eBook is an ever-evolving resource, and the plan is to have new sections added every three months. That means you can come back to it again and again, and continuously benefit from further information, guides, and the expertise of those in the Shifties Community and our friends who specialise in the vast array of subjects relevant to business.

## About Shifties

Before you dive into the index to pick out the areas you want to prioritise, I would just like to introduce Shifties to you: who we are as an organisation and how we support those that engage with our entrepreneurial efforts. Shifties brings together one of the most critical aspects of business: Connect, Learn and Grow.

I founded Shifties out of the need for support for the growth of micro-businesses. As a business owner myself, I have seen first-hand how tough it can be, with the burden of responsibility and so much to learn, yet no real support network at the outset.

With so many traps out there trying to lure you into “I am your guru” sales funnels, it becomes impossible to reliably Google ‘how to grow a business’ these days. The process can become increasingly isolating.

Well, in early 2018 I decided I’d had enough of trying to fit into these “traditional” frameworks and after years of developing the other businesses I am involved with, through both successes and failures - Shift Momentum and Shifties were born.

We provide exactly what is required by way of tools, events, infrastructure, incubation, access to expertise, training programmes and a community to thrive in together, all driven by its members. By combining this environment with the ambition to achieve, we help business owners accelerate superstar businesses with growth potential beyond reach.

With a growing team and presence, we are building momentum towards a promising future for everyone that engages with our entrepreneurial efforts.

The Shifties website — [www.shifties.co.uk](http://www.shifties.co.uk) — is where you will find out how you can get involved in some of the challenges, quests and events we host regularly. Get yourself signed up to some of these, and you can begin to benefit from having a thriving community around you to support your efforts as an entrepreneur or business owner.

A massive thank you to all the contributors who have collaborated on this project so far, whose details can be found throughout the eBook. Please do connect with them and check out their content to absorb more of their expertise, inevitably giving you that edge in the market.

Most importantly, we all hope this resource delivers the value we expect it to. If there are any topics you would like to see added to the eBook in the future, then let us know via [hello@shifties.co.uk](mailto:hello@shifties.co.uk). We look forward to hearing any suggestions you may have.

*Alex Hughes*

Entrepreneur, business owner & founder of Shifties



# Business Owner Mindset



Justin Leigh, focus4growth



*“Responsibility equals Accountability equals Ownership. A sense of ownership is the most powerful weapon a team or organisation can have.”*

- Pat Summitt

Regardless of where you are on your business journey, getting your ‘owner mindset’ right is critical. If you’re just starting out, this chapter will help you adopt the right mindset for success. If you’ve been established for a while, it will serve as a helpful reminder of the attitude you need to succeed.

Now, we’ve only got a single chapter to cover this important topic, so we’re going to focus on the essential points from my experience. First and foremost, the most important person to focus on at the start is **you!**

## Responsibility and Accountability

Decide today that you will ‘own it all’. Everything that happens in your business is your responsibility: you make it all happen, and you are the reason for success or failure: no one else, just you.

- How did it feel to read that?
- Are you owning it all?
- Did it make you feel uncomfortable?
- Did it make you feel excited?

This is a fundamental first step in your transition to cultivating your business owner mindset.

If you haven’t been seeing yourself as a business owner or a leader until now, this is your opportunity to make the shift and step up to the next level. This is your liberating moment - embrace it.

## Self-Management

As a business owner or a leader, you must work on yourself first. If you don’t prioritise your health, energy and development, you are always going to compromise your performance. If you do that, you will compromise the performance of your team.

As a business owner or leader, you have to put yourself first. This might sound like a contrary opinion, because most of your life will call for you to continuously put others first. But you can only ‘give’ at the level required of a business owner if you yourself are ‘fully charged’.

Decide what it will take for you to put yourself first, so you have the required energy to be the driver your business will need.

## **Vision and Purpose**

People join companies because they like the company vision and ethos, or they just need a job; they stay because they have a leader that inspires and supports them to live by it.

What makes people want to give their best, fully commit, go 'all in'?

- They do it because the leader, their manager (or both) has connected with them
- They do it because they are clear on where the company is going in the future (the vision)
- They do it because they are clear on why the company is going there and why it exists (the purpose)
- They do it because they know where they fit within the vision & purpose. They have connected and resonated with both the vision & purpose, now and in the future

As a business owner or leader, you can create a highly engaged team and a successful business. One of the most impactful ways you can do that is to create a meaningful vision & purpose with your team. Then ensure everyone has the chance to connect with it so that it has meaning for them.

## **Your Team and Your Clients**

I was working with a client once, and they said to me: "The client should always come first, don't you agree Justin?"

I said: "Maybe. I see it as situational. In many situations, our clients will come first. BUT, there will be times when your team will come first. And if they have been serving your clients at the highest level possible, then, your clients will understand. We are all people first."

Further down the road, as a business owner or leader there will likely come a point where you will develop and assemble a team. Naturally you will need to devote a lot of time to both this team and your clients, accommodating their needs so your business can flourish. However, the needs of your team, clients, partners and suppliers cannot be nurtured if your own battery is depleted. Whilst your client is undoubtedly a high priority, your ability to meet and exceed their expectations will be a direct reflection of your own mindset and approach, with your team an extension of this.

Always orientate to put yourself, then your team first, and keep your clients at the heart of everything you do, as they will make your business thrive; without them, you will not be in business.

Putting clients at the heart of everything you do is not a mantra, statement of intent or a quote. It's a series of continual actions that you demonstrate; Actions

that your team can see you take, then follow your example. If you can incorporate the client in every area of your business and every decision you make, your team will always 'default' to serve the client.

By simply repeating the question "how does this impact our clients?" as often as possible, you will ensure you keep the client a central factor in everything you do.

When it comes to your team, there are three areas where you should invest time:

1. Your relationships with them
2. Clarity of goals and expectations
3. Their continued growth and development

There are many ways to work on these three vital areas, but, unfortunately, many business owners and leaders neglect them all.

Here's a simple principle: schedule a one-hour monthly meeting with each member of your team. Treat this meeting as if it were sacred time that cannot be changed. Cover four topics:

1. How are they?
2. How are they performing vs. their goals & expectations?
3. How are they developing & growing and how can you help?
4. How can we help our clients better?

Just doing this simple thing once every month will transform your position as a business owner. Your team will feel clearer on their goals, more engaged, and motivated to do their best work.





# Resilience & Productivity

Justin Leigh, focus4growth



*“Productivity is less about what you do with your time and more about how you run your mind”*

- Robin Sharma

As we look towards the future, our work and life environments have changed forever. It's not good or bad; it just is. The future will be different.

Productivity and resilience are linked in our minds and our actions. They were necessary before the Global Pandemic (I'm writing this in July 2020 as we are all still figuring out how to navigate this new environment), now they are more vital than ever. This chapter was originally only going to cover productivity. As I was planning it, I recognised that would have been an oversight, as building resilience is a key enabler for productivity. So, we'll consider them together.

In this short chapter, I will share four key principles I learned to increase my resilience and productivity that have helped me in my 28 years of business.

## Generate Energy - PRIMING

I cannot overstate the importance of generating energy every day. Many people don't realise the value of this simple principle, they have an endless list of excuses about why they can't do it, We all have the same 24 hours in a day: the significant factor is how we use these hours and what we decide must be included in them.

This is the morning routine I follow to generate energy every day (yes, every day):

- Self Reflection - Gratitude, Appreciation and Excitement
- Exercise & Education (listening to podcasts / audiobooks / tutorials)
- Stretching / Yoga / Tai Chi / Mindfulness / Meditation

The first 90 minutes of every day I spend on the routine above. It gives me clarity, builds energy and creates the 'background noise' for the rest of my day. This process is called 'PRIMING', and it works.

Without this routine, I couldn't hit the heights of productivity and resilience I know I'm capable of. Think about the activities that would help you to 'PRIME' and make a commitment to yourself to include them daily.



## Focus & Prioritisation

Once I am ready to start my day, I don't start straight away. I check my diary, my priorities, and my actions list. Once I'm clear on the day and have 'sense-checked' that I'm working on the most critical tasks (or have scheduled time to work on them), then I start my day.

Here's a process you can follow that's simple, powerful and effective

1. Remind yourself regularly of your purpose — your higher vision for yourself
2. Empty your head of your to do list – keep a digital or physical list. Keep a list of all of the 'possible' actions you could be working on
3. Prioritise the actions on the list from most to least important – I use numbering
4. Work on them in priority order (And give them your full attention by turning off all other notifications, phones, social media, etc.)
5. Schedule blocks of time in your diary (with the task in the header, so you stay focused on it)

## Review, Assess, Prioritise, Act

This is a principle I use throughout the day to stop unconsciously going from task to task as the day goes along. Use this process each time you finish one task and are due to start another.

### Review

- Check how you feel (give yourself recognition and get yourself ready to go again)
- Review your list and check off the completed items

### Assess

- Check nothing else has come up that needs to go on the list
- Run through the list again (this imprints the priorities in your mind)

### Prioritise

- Re-prioritise your list — there may be an urgent task that needs completing
- Get yourself in the 'right frame of mind' for the task (whatever that is for you)

### Act

- Set out the next block of time (25 minutes is usually a good 'sprint')
- Turn off the distractions — get going on the task

## Transitions

The final area I want to cover is a powerful principle called 'transitions'.

You might be wondering what on earth this means, simply put; transitions are intentional shifts in your perspective and your energy between tasks. I'm sure you've noticed that you need to be in a different 'state of mind' when you're writing, than when you're meeting people.

That's true for various tasks we conduct throughout our working days and even in our personal lives. Rather than move from one activity to the other unconsciously we can use transitions to cause an intentional shift.

It's like a shortened version of our 'PRIMING' exercise from earlier in this chapter.

Here's a simple way to do it:

1. Stand up, raise your arms and stretch your body
2. Now sit down in a comfortable seat
3. Take five deep breaths in and out — focus on relaxing your neck and your shoulders
4. PRIME yourself for the next task. Ask “how can I do this with maximum efficiency and enjoyment?”

Notice your answer. Then make a start on the task. The impact of this is transformational.

These four simple principles and practices can make a **MASSIVE** impact on your resilience, your mindset and, of course, your productivity.

Wishing you every success, now and in the future.

# Mental Health 101

**Danielle Bridge, ABC Life Support**



Wow! You are an awesome and amazing individual about to embark on the journey of a lifetime. Setting up your own business is one of the most fulfilling things that you can do. However, it can also be one of the most stressful, which is where my knowledge comes in.

I am an expert in the field of Health and Safety, which includes Mental Health. As a business owner, you will need to be aware of the many responsibilities you will have to others and yourself.

So, let's get started...

It is essential to understand that everybody has mental health. It's an indisputable aspect of life, and awareness of this should be threaded intrinsically throughout your organisation's culture; opening a channel of communication, and setting an example for positive mental health practices.. As an entrepreneur, you get to start fresh, no bad habits and complete autonomy over your own decisions! This is so exciting and liberating; you get to exact change right from the off!

*"Everyone is somewhere on the mental health spectrum, so this is a business productivity issue which should be dealt with alongside other health and safety considerations. Creating a positive environment for mental health demonstrably costs less than failing to do so."*

Nigel Carrington, University of the Arts London – Thriving at work<sup>1</sup>

So, we know how vital knowledge surrounding mental health is, but let's underline that thinking with a couple of statistics when it comes to mental health in the workplace:

- Only 24% of managers have received some form of training on mental health at work
- Mental health problems cost UK businesses £34.9 billion a year through from sickness absence, reduced productivity at work and staff turnover
- 15% of people had even suffered disciplinary actions due to disclosing information on their mental health
- Only 1 in 10 SMEs offer occupational health support compared to 8 in 10 large organisations. The bottom line is SMEs are much less likely to have mental health policies in place

As you can see, these statistics can be concerning. Current standards need work, and I take you back to one of my original points: you can make a massive

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The [Stevenson and Farmer](#) review of mental health and employers report undertaken under the May government.

difference to yourself and any staff that you may take on as your business grows, if you have a knowledge of the issues at the beginning of your journey.

So what can you do?

- Produce, implement, and communicate a [‘Mental Health at Work’](#) action plan
- Develop awareness around mental health and visibility of actions across the board
- Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when you or employees are struggling
- Provide your employees with a [healthy and safe working environment](#)
- Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing

Lots to think about, but get it right at the beginning and the impact that it can have on you and your staff is priceless and could actually save lives.

Finally, a few points to take away:

- Mental health is just as important as physical health
- Mental health is an essential and mandatory part of the risk assessments, which every company needs to consider
- Mental health is a constant. As a business, you need to be aware of what mental health is and how to implement systems and protocols in your workplace that address any issues that may arise when working with human beings.

Get involved, get staff involved, and include your staff in the decisions and direction you will take with them in mind. A robust culture of wellbeing and a policy surrounding the subject should be implemented, so that all staff know what the expectations are.

The good news is that there is plentiful information out there to help you, and taking the time to do this properly will pay dividends.

## **Everybody has mental health**

Many think of mental health as being something that somebody suffers from. Interestingly many people do not think of themselves as having mental health and see it in the context of mental ill-health and diagnosable conditions. But we all have a mind, and we all have thoughts, feelings and emotions connected to our minds, including hormonal fluctuations. Therefore, we all have mental health to look after, just like we do with our physical health.

**TOP TIP** — Understand the signs of when it’s just a bad day and recognise if it becomes something more persistent and negative. Speak up if it begins to develop to the latter perhaps to a trusted friend or your GP. Remember, it’s good to talk.

## **Isolation and loneliness can be a problem**

Isolation can sometimes be fabulous, and in my world, I crave the chance to spend a few hours alone: to gather my thoughts and work out what needs to be done and

when, especially when every other aspect of my life is hectic, with small children and a business to run. Repetitive isolation for long periods can sometimes have a negative impact on a person and if the thought of spending another hour in your own company fills you with dread, do something about it!

**TOP TIP** — Get out! With more people working alone, find a local hub to join like-minded people in the same situation as you. Hot desking is easily accessible these days. Libraries and coffee shops are also great for people to be occasionally part of the hustle and bustle of life.

## It's okay not to be okay

Do you ever wake up in a foul mood, low and unmotivated and feel that it's wrong to feel like this? Well, actually it's perfectly fine to have the odd bad day. Occasional negative mental wellbeing is not equivalent to mental ill-health and shouldn't be looked upon as the same.

Sometimes, a person can fight the very natural urge to bed down and chill out, but by doing so, create a negative association with the need to relax and take time off.

**TOP TIP** - Sometimes, chocolate and binge-watching TV is perfect for the soul. Or shopping, or lunch with friends and a chin wag, or watching Avengers at the cinema for the 3rd time. Just saying...

## Thoughts are just thoughts

Have you ever thought the most random thought and wondered where it came from? I certainly have and at times, I worry about where the thought came from for longer than I should. This is a normal activity but one that can cause a great deal of distress if you have nowhere to put that thought. It's called ruminating and can be very annoying!

Remember, you are not your thoughts. They have no power over you unless you act on them.

**TOP TIP** – Meditation – I know... you may be thinking about sitting in the lotus position and chanting and for some, it may be just that (I think it looks really cool!) but for some, taking time out, closing your eyes and practising clearing your mind can rid you of persistent unhelpful thoughts. Remember, the more you think about wanting to get rid of the thought, the more it stays there! Let it go, just like Elsa said! Why not try downloading and utilising the Headspace App on your phone and seeing it makes a positive difference.

## Work-life balance (what does that even look like?)

I have been looking for the ever-elusive work-life balance for a very long time, and I still can't find it. I think this is a difficult one as it's going to be different for everybody, right? I mean, I have other responsibilities and, therefore, cannot commit all of my time to my ever-expanding business, but at the same time, I like working (a lot!). This causes lots of problems for some, especially if your life involves others being in it.

What does this have to do with mental health, you ask? Well, OVERWHELM it for a start! For me, it's too much; my brain can't handle it. I could start showing signs of panic and anxiety, and although this is normal, if it's there most of the time, something needs to be done about it.

You may have this one down, under control, in the bag and if you do, nice one. Maybe you can share how you keep a lid on it?

**TOP TIP** — This one is going to look a bit different for different people and could be about setting strict working times to incorporate family into your life. Turning off your phone when the kids get home from school (or your partner). Turning off email notifications or leaving your phone in another room. Booking friends and family time into your work schedule. Delegating or outsourcing those time demanding jobs that do not bring joy or money!

Look at what the problem is and look at the practical things you can do to help yourself.



# Five Legal Documents You Must Have



## Various Partners, EMW Law LLP

Regardless of your market, there are five documents every new business should have:

### Terms of Business

What is it?

Your terms of business detail the terms by which your business, well, does its business. This is the contract between you and your customers and regulates how your relationship with your customers will work.

Why is it important?

If you want to be paid on time (or at all!) it is safe to say that you need to have terms of business and they need to work for you. The terms need to also outline carefully what you will do and what you won't do, what your customers' responsibilities are, and limit your business' liability in the event that things go wrong. Whilst Terms of Business may not seem like your first priority when starting your business, getting these right from the outset is important to make sure that you are adequately protected and that you can receive the money that you've worked so hard to earn.

- Josh Clark, EMW Law LLP

### Shareholders' Agreement and Articles of Association

What are they?

These documents are the constitutional documents of your company and together they detail the parameters for the administration, management, structure and the running of the internal affairs of your company. Articles of Association are available publicly on the Companies House register, whereas a Shareholders' Agreement is a private document between the relevant parties. The Articles of Association will bind all shareholders regardless of when they become a shareholder, whereas the Shareholders' Agreement will only bind new shareholders if they sign a deed of adherence to be bound by its terms.

Why are they important?



Without these bespoke documents in place, the operation of your company will be in accordance with the model articles of association for companies prescribed by the Companies Act 2006 and applicable legislation and the provisions contained therein may not be how you want your company to operate. The terms of these documents together can operate to regulate matters as you desire in connection with, for example, the payment of dividends, the distribution of capital on a sale of the company, the issue of new shares, the transfer of shares, shareholders who leave, directors' powers and many other matters.

- Kerry Jiminez, EMW Law LLP

## **Non-Disclosure Agreement**

If you have information that's confidential but that you want to share with a third party (partners, suppliers, customers), then you need a non-disclosure agreement. Also known as an NDA or a confidentiality agreement, it's a relatively short document, but don't underestimate its importance.

Why is it important?

An NDA sets a general rule that whoever is receiving the information has to keep it confidential and is not to disclose it to anyone else (hence the name of the document!).

Sharing information which can't be used at all is a fairly pointless exercise, so the document will also set out some limited exclusions to those blanket rules of confidentiality and non-disclosure. It's normal, for example, for the person receiving the information to be able to use it to evaluate a project and share the information with employees involved in that project.

As with any legal contract, if the terms aren't kept, there's a potential claim against the wrongdoer for damages or even an injunction.

- James Geary, EMW Law LLP

## **Contract of Employment**

Put simply, a contract of employment is the contract that regulates the relationship between you and your employees. It sets out the job that you expect them to do and what they can expect from you in return. At its most basic it will set out the job title, the rate of pay, the hours of work, holiday pay and entitlement, sick pay, redundancy pay, and notice period. More complicated contracts contain provisions concerning confidential information and restrictions on the employee's post termination activities.

Why is it important?

There are 2 reasons:

Firstly, the law requires every employee to be given a 's.1 statement' at the start of their employment. Although the particulars required for a s.1 statement are fairly



basic, if you are going to have to give a s.1 statement, it makes sense to incorporate that in the contract of employment.

Secondly, although terms of employment (except those required by a s.1 statement) can be agreed verbally, that is a recipe for misunderstanding and miscommunication which can lead to disputes. It therefore makes sense for any agreements about terms of employment to be written down and incorporated into a contract of employment.

- Jon Taylor, EMW Law LLP

## **Lease/Tenancy Agreement**

What is it?

As your business grows, much like with employees, there will (hopefully!) be a time when you need to think about taking on a business premises. A lease or business tenancy is a formal document detailing your rights to occupy a premises for the purpose of running your business and the conditions that apply, as well as important terms such as rent and what you can and can't do at the premises.

Why is it important?

Many new businesses take on premises on a handshake basis, or agree to sign up to the landlord's 'standard lease', because they want to save costs or trust their landlord — this is often a costly mistake.

Without a business tenancy, you may have no rights to stay in that building despite your business having operated from there for a number of years, or the landlord may be able to remove you with little notice, increase your rent or hold you to terms that you would not agree to if you were advised of their consequences. So, whilst a tenancy is important to protect you and your business, it is just as important to make sure you get the proper advice on that tenancy.

- Josh Clark, EMW Law LLP



# Finance Essentials



**Cameron Paul, Spinifex Accounting**



If I had the opportunity to travel back in time to the start of my clients' business journeys, the first and most important thing I would ask them to do, would be to separate their business bank transactions from their personal bank transactions.

The easiest way to do this to start with is to use a spare personal account that you no longer use and put all your business transactions through it. This is because it is vital to identify what is business income and what is personal income.

Why you ask? Here are some reasons:

1. When starting out in business, one of your first tasks should be to review your personal finances and determine how much you NEED each month to run your household. Just like an employee, a business owner should use this amount as their monthly budget and only take this amount from their business, avoiding the temptation to treat all the funds in the business account as theirs to spend how they like.
2. Once you have identified your personal budget, it is time to budget for your business. What costs MUST be covered each month in the running of your business?
3. You now have a target of the income required each month to stay in business: your personal requirements + your business requirements = sales target.
4. Having these transactions in a separate bank account will make the process of reviewing them much easier, which ultimately will boost the chances of you actually taking the time to review. This will allow you to benefit from always having up to date information to feedback into your budgets to identify if your sales target is too low.
5. The review process can be as simple as using Microsoft Excel or a more professional accounting package, such as Xero or Quickbooks. The bottom line is: it doesn't matter which method you choose, as long as you do it!

If the first piece of advice is to start using a separate bank account, the second would be to find an accountant for a chat within the first three months of your business journey.

Business owners often seek out an accountant 12 to 18 months after they have started their venture when they realise they need to complete a tax return. A simple chat with an accountant in the early months will not only give you a better understanding of what your legal requirements as a business owner are. It will also

allow you to consider the different types of business structure and which one suits you best, namely:

- [Sole Trader](#)
- [Partnership](#)
- [Limited Company](#)

In addition, you will also discuss and consider the various taxes:

- [Income Tax](#)
- [National Insurance](#)
- [Corporation Tax](#)
- [VAT](#)
- [PAYE](#) and Employers National Insurance

None of this should be daunting. A good accountant can explain the differences in the business structures and how the various taxes affect you. With a better understanding of what plans you have for your future business, the easier it is to set up the best structure from the beginning and not have to change that structure later. Furthermore, you'll only pay the tax that you're required to pay.

So now you've:

- Separated your personal funds from that of your business
- Set up a budget for you personally and one for your business
- Engaged an accountant and set up the correct structure and registered for the appropriate taxes

The final finance essentials tip would be to review cashflow reports and budgets regularly.

By knowing your income, costs, and profit monthly, you can identify cashflow issues well in advance and take action to avoid any significant problems arising. A good cashflow will forward plan at least six months, and while a lot of a cash flow is guesswork and is out of date as soon as it is produced: regularly reviewing and tweaking your cashflow will see if you end any months in the red rather than the black, giving you time to pivot your business to where it needs to be.

With these tips in place from the start of your business journey, you will be in a much better position to succeed and grow into a thriving business.



# What makes a great brand?



**Russ Edgar, Velocity Design and Marketing**



If you enter 'branding' or 'brand' into Google you will find endless results trying to explain what it means and why it's important for a business to have it.

It can be baffling. If you ask most people what a brand is they might say it's a logo or a colour scheme, or even, if you're lucky, that it's a consistent identity across all areas of communication.

And it is those things – but it's a whole lot more besides.

What if I said a brand is a feeling?

Would you agree that you can experience a business's brand when you visit a shop, call them on the phone, or by holding one of their products in your hand? That these things make you feel a certain way?

I bet if I asked you to imagine a restaurant designed by Apple, you could picture it quite easily. But if I asked the same thing about Lenovo, you might struggle.

The Apple brand is legendary, of course, and took decades to build to its current global status in our society, but everyone knows what to expect from them – from the ads on TV to the customer service, to the beautiful boxes the products arrive in. And that is due to relentless focus on the organisation's brand and how it infuses every decision the business makes. It really isn't just about the logo and colour scheme, but every time you see that partially eaten apple, you know how it makes you feel.

But what does this mean for you and your business?

To be honest, it depends on what you want for it. Do you want a little lifestyle offering that enables you to have the work/life balance that is right for you, with just a few familiar clients each month? Or would you be looking to build a global e-commerce organisation over the next ten years?

Your original idea for your business will inform all your decisions about your brand. Get it exactly right from the off and you'll stand a much greater chance of achieving your goals.

In our work we like to have the following areas ready before we even talk about a

visual identity for your brand:

1. An analysis of your competition
2. Your reasons for being in business
3. Mission, vision and values
4. Marketplace?
5. A clear story
6. A sense of the 'personality' you want to convey in your work
7. The promise you will make to your customers
8. Value proposition Objectives
9. Customer service standards and promise
10. Image
11. Positioning statement – what makes you different from your competitors in the
12. Why exactly would a customer choose you over your competitors?
13. Key message(s)

When all the above are agreed and clearly communicated, we can actually start to talk about the artistic direction, which usually involves the following elements:

- Logo
- Logo variations
- Key colours
- Additional colour palette options
- Typefaces
- Type treatments
- Style for images
- Library of graphic assets
- Videography
- Packaging
- Digital platform considerations

And this wouldn't be a chapter about branding if I didn't mention cohesion.

As long as your brand is communicated absolutely consistently on all platforms and by all members of staff at every level in your business, you will definitely have a functioning brand.

And why is a great brand identity so important?

This is such a hard question for us to answer because our whole business is built around how much attention we give to stand out in our chosen marketplace with an eye-catching and memorable brand. It's so obvious to us, that it's a bit difficult to articulate! But here's my attempt:

- Your brand identity is the first thing potential customers will see
- You don't get a second chance to make an excellent first impression
- The competition surrounds you, you need to stand apart!

- You need to distinguish your business in the marketplace so that customers trust you and choose you
- It helps existing and potential customers remember you (hopefully positively)
- It tells your customers and clients what they might expect from your business
- It helps to build trust and generate sales and repeat business
- Brand recognition in the marketplace makes a business more attractive as an opportunity for investors
- Employees working for a reputable brand, held in high regard in the public eye, often have a deep connection with that brand and will remain loyal and committed – it creates a strong sense of belonging

Important things to remember about your brand's visual identity:

Your logo is the most vital visual element of your branding. A powerful, easily memorable, professionally designed logo makes an impression on a potential customer at first glance. Strategic use of the logo on marketing products, such as your website, business cards, brochures, leaflets and emails are all great way of emphasising and reinforcing your brand to your clients.

Your audience should have the same experience of your brand, no matter where they find you.

No brand is set in stone. Over time, you may want to evolve your offering and brand identity or do a complete re-brand. Your clients, emerging technology and the ever-changing economy will dictate when you may need to consider a brand make-over.

Creating a brand for your business needn't be complicated or stressful. It can be a fantastic experience that you come to see as a crucial cog in the business-building machine.

Be 100% happy with your brand and its visual identity and you'll be that bit more confident presenting your business to new clients.

# Considering Intellectual Property



**Claire Breheny and Andy Carver, Stobbs**



Intellectual property is present in every business – whether it be the name or brand, the design of a product or packaging, fonts, the mechanism behind an invention, or works of art or music. Protection of these assets can be crucial to the growth and success of a company, so it is important to consider at an early stage the various facets of IP that could apply – including trade marks, designs, patents, and copyright.

Trade mark protection is a particularly important area to consider, especially when building brand loyalty. IP is a broad topic, and we have therefore focussed here on this aspect with some key things to think about:

## The Basics

Trade marks can take many forms – words, logos, shapes, colours, sounds (even smells!) – and can be both registered and unregistered. Each territory (UK, EU, US etc.) has their own trade mark system and registration process.

In order to prevent unfair monopolies, trade marks have to be registered against a specified list of goods / services, which are organised into numbered classes (1 – 45) and cover anything from clothing (class 25) to education services (class 41).

You should only use the ® symbol against a trade mark that is registered, but the TM symbol can be used for unregistered trade marks.

## Picking a Brand

Whilst there are many commercial considerations when choosing a brand, it is important to also consider the legal implications from the outset.

Registered trade marks cannot be either non-distinctive (e.g. a generic word such as PERFECT) or descriptive of the goods / services specified (e.g. CANINE for dog food), and applications for such will likely be met with objection by the relevant trade mark office (which can be difficult and costly to overcome in some cases).

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On this basis, “made up” words such as TESCO or KODAK can often be the best option to avoid objections, since they have no inherent meaning, though



it could be harder to promote these marks when starting out (i.e. there is less communicated to the consumer regarding the offering itself). A good brand overall strikes the balance between being distinctive, but also alludes to the offering itself, to assist with promotion. A shortlist of potential names can sometimes be useful to work through, so you can assess each against commercial requirements and the legal implications around protection and enforcement.

## Searching

Before any new brand is launched, or indeed if an existing brand is to be expanded into a new territory or product / service area, it is highly advisable to have clearance searches carried out to make sure a trade mark is free for use and registration.

Searches can be carried out with various different degrees of accuracy and scope (and cost); however, they typically involve a review of existing identical and similar trade marks already on the register which cover the same or similar goods / services to those proposed. Usually both the legal and commercial risks are considered. In other words, whilst there may be an earlier mark that is legally problematic, commercially the proprietor may operate in a different business area and may be unconcerned or willing to come to an agreement.

Searching pre-launch allows you a fuller picture of any risks associated with going ahead, and more options to mitigate potential issues. The biggest risk with not doing this is having earlier rights holders crop up months or years down the line – a possible worst-case scenario being a complete rebranding, which would be disastrous.

It should be noted that simply having a company name and / or domain for your chosen brand does not indicate that it is also free to use and register, nor does it offer any protection against third parties.

## Protection

The next step will be to file trade mark applications, which should involve careful thought as to present and short-term goods / services and territories of interest, but also consideration of future plans – i.e. whether there is any geographical or commercial expansion on the horizon.

Seek advice on which trade marks provide the best protection for your brand. A word mark typically offers a good base level of protection (as it covers all stylisations), but it may be useful to file for a logo separately, or even elements of product packaging designs.

Once an application is lodged, assuming it meets the registration criteria of the relevant trade mark office and / or does not receive any third-party opposition, the trade mark will become registered.



## **Enforcement / Watching**

Enforcing your registered trade mark against infringers can be just as important as protecting the brand in the first place. Taking a passive approach to use and / or attempted registration of conflicting third-party marks can dilute the strength or distinctiveness of your brand over time.

Various watching services are available to ensure that you are made aware of potentially infringing uses or registrations as and when they come about in order to be able to take the appropriate action – inclusive of trade mark register watches, and social media and online content watches. When problematic third party uses arise and/or problematic applications are filed, it is best to seek advice immediately as to how best to proceed in order to protect your rights.

# Marketing Strategy



Joe Glover, The Marketing Meetup



Rory Sutherland, Vice-Chairman of Ogilvy, puts it best when he says: “Marketing is the lens of the customer in your organisation.”

That means to say: marketing is an attitude as much as it is an activity. It is far broader than just promotion and advertising — it’s everything your customer can see, touch or interact within your business.

Mark Ritson, Professor of Marketing, puts marketing into three buckets, each of which deserves time and attention.

These buckets are: **Market Orientation, Strategy, and Tactics**. Here, we’ll explain each, giving you a reference point on how to build out your own marketing activities.

## Market Orientation

Market orientation is the first thing you should do before even having a product. Simply put, in this stage, you’re looking to understand the pains, needs and desires of the market you have chosen.

To find out these pains, needs and desires, you can ask people, observe what they say on social media, or more formally, post surveys or bring together a focus group to ask questions.

Essentially, you are looking to get to a place where you’re able to identify all those ‘don’t you hate it when...’ or ‘I would love it if...’ moments your potential customers have.

Market orientation is always the bit people miss or skip over, but by having an understanding of what the market wants, you’re able to create a product and use language and imagery to advertise it in a way that matters to the customer, rather than just mattering to you.

## Strategy

Now you understand what the market wants, you’re able to start developing a strategy to match. Simply put, this strategy dictates the audience you are targeting, tone of voice, key messages, what your brand will sound like and other elements which will stay consistent with time, even if your tactics change.



Here, the target audience is perhaps the most important. If you are saying your audience is 'everyone', what you're actually saying is your audience is 'no one' because your message will be so broad, it won't resonate with anyone. One tool that is worth considering is developing a 'persona'. Here, you create a fictional version of your target audience, almost as if they're in the room there with you. The advantage here is you can go back to the persona with every decision you make and ask the question 'will this thing I am doing benefit <persona name>?'

For more on creating personas, there is a great resource here:

<https://www.hubspot.com/make-my-persona>

Once you have created your persona, everything else quite simply begins to fall out of this version of your target audience, including tone of voice, the messages that will resonate and more.

## Tactics

This is the bit everyone rushes to, but will ultimately fall flat if you haven't done the groundwork upfront in the orientation and strategy stages.

The simplest way to evaluate this upfront is the 4Ps, although there are many nuances once you get cracking.

1. Product Finally, we're defining what we sell. The product is a solution to the problems discovered in the orientation stage.
2. Price Here, you're looking for the right price for the market. With enough understanding of the problem you are solving and the financial position of your customers, price should fall out fairly quickly, too.
3. Place Where do you want your product to be consumed? Are you online only, in person, on the move? All these things will contribute to how customers will interact with your company.
4. Promotion At this stage, it's worth stopping to dedicate a little time to this section.

## Promotion

First, it's better to stop thinking about marketing as digital marketing vs. old-fashioned marketing. If you're solving the needs of the customer, you're marketing.

Promotion is the process of advertising or communicating what your product or service is about to the customer. It's also the bit where everyone says "my cousin has told me to start on Facebook, so I think we should do that."

When you're planning on doing your promotion, try splitting up your activity into five stages:

- Awareness Making someone aware of your product
- Consideration Making someone interested in your product, move to purchase



- Purchase Making the purchase process as easy as possible
- Retention Keeping the customers you have rather than finding new ones
- Advocacy Turning your current customers into your biggest fans

This is useful because, when you're looking to start your activity, it's essential not to just do stuff, it's important to do it with purpose. The above five steps provide the 'with purpose' bit.

There are many ways to promote your business and no 'right' answer on the mix of channels that make up your strategy. The only correct solution is whatever suits your audience. However, you're far more likely to know exactly what benefits these channels can bring by doing the orientation and strategy stages.

## Measurement

Finally, there has to be a word put in the direction of measurement.

It's no good chucking £100 at something and hoping it will work. Instead, take a moment to consider what you would like out of your marketing activities and then plan how you can measure this success.

Ultimately, it's all about understanding what works, doing more of that, and doing less of what doesn't.

# Digital Marketing Set Up Essentials



**Markie Reeds, Digital Reeds**



When starting a business — primarily online — there are so many tools, platforms and ideas that you can get lost in the digital ocean. Everyone has their own strategy and preferences, however you need to understand your own goals first. Always start with the goal in mind, not just a new tool or software someone tells you to use.

Example goals could be to increase your visibility, connect with and build an audience, create a smooth customer journey, or improve customer retention.

In the saturated world of online, you must get to know your ideal customer inside and out and then stand out by offering the best solution to their problems. Think about your customer journey, how do they find you, how do they acquire your services or purchase from you? Map this out and see what could be replicated or enhanced by online solutions.

Start small, and focus on one thing at a time. When learning, initially it is easy to think you need to be everywhere: websites, social media, email list. It can quickly become overwhelming: you end up with several mediocre platforms, as well as taking a lot of your time out of other areas of business. Focus on one main thing first, and then build each one in turn. Working with a professional can definitely help speed up the process.

When I started, I set-up 'Google My Business'. I completed all the tasks, and still post there regularly. I transformed my personal Facebook profile to help promote my business and set up a business page. Initially, I devoted all my focus to social media. Such an approach allows you a little freedom to figure out your online positioning, what people need, what works and what doesn't, and gives you insight for website development and next steps.

As you do not own the social media platforms, you will need a website as a backup for any possible issues (losing access, system issues, hackers, etc.). This doesn't need to start as anything complicated. Just one page to showcase who you are and what you do; you can always point people to social media if you are more active there. For my website, I used a basic WordPress template. I had created similar sites before and quite enjoyed the process of learning and creating, as WordPress is quite intuitive. But beware, it is easy to spend a lot of time on aesthetics rather than focusing on building a functional site that showcases your offering and makes you money. (If you are planning to sell products online, be sure to check out the eCommerce chapter before setting up WordPress.)

Your email list (Compliant with UK Data Protection Act) will also become your best friend, as it provides direct access to your customers. Plan out content and share knowledge or ideas of value to keep that audience warm, interested and ready to purchase. Tools such as Active Campaign or MailChimp can help you create branded templates and automate collecting and sending of emails. Again, working with a professional can definitely help; it can take a lot of time to set-up websites and manage emails, and it's time that could better spent following up leads and making money in your business!

Going digital is never 'set up and forget'. You will need to monitor analytics, tweak and adapt to changes continuously. This can be time-consuming, but worth the investment if it contributes to your business goals.

What to do now:

- **Set-Up Google My Business**

Complete as fully as possible and post to it regularly. This will help highlight you on the local map, as well as collecting reviews.

- **Identify the business goals to focus on**

Write down what business goals digital marketing could support.

- **Create a social media account**

If you haven't already created a social account for the business on Facebook, do it now! Create an account where your ideal customers would spend time.

- **Make a plan**

Identify all the elements that would be beneficial – social media, website, email list.

- **Be patient**

Nothing is going to happen overnight. You need to be patient, even when being consistent online. Focus on one thing for at least a year before you worry about lack of results.

- **Start with one thing**

Get the ball rolling you can tweak as you go. But make a START!

## Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Finally, search engine optimization enables you to improve the quality and number of visits to a website or a web page from search engines. SEO targets organic (free) traffic, rather than direct or paid traffic, by getting your pages to rank higher on search results on Google and rival search engines.

Your SEO keywords are the all important words and phrases in your web content that make it possible for people to find your site via search engines. A website that is optimized well "speaks the same language" as its potential visitors; with keywords that help connect searchers to your site. So, understanding what your customers are searching for will give you a brilliant start.

# Getting Started with eCommerce



Daniel Jones, RUNESILK



If you have a product to sell, there are a few options available to get your product to market. Ultimately, the best direction for you to take will depend on your product offering and available budget.

When starting out, you should find one or two platforms to focus your attention on and get them right first before expanding across multiple channels, as this can make keeping up with stock movements a challenge.

## Low budget options for crafts

If you make products under the 'craft' category and your items are unique, i.e. not mass-produced outside the UK, then ETSY is a great marketplace for you. Listings cost just \$0.20 per item plus a transaction fee when you sell an item.

Whilst it's always been a favourite for craft item business owners, eBay is getting a little saturated, and that makes it quite challenging to get your items in front of the right audience.

Right now, time is likely your most valuable asset. Spend some of that time, building your Etsy store and setting out the theme to match what you sell. You can download and use the Sell on mobile Etsy app to manage orders, edit listings and respond to buyers instantly, from anywhere — which is useful when running this alongside your other line of work (if you have one).

You can also utilise Etsy's off-site ads feature, which will promote your product outside of the platform for 15% of the final fee. Just make sure it is worth the amount to get your product out there.

## Medium budget options for eCommerce

If you want a professional-looking eCommerce website, then you have two solid options: WooCommerce via WordPress and Shopify. Out of the two, Shopify is the most user-friendly platform, in my experience. I find the need for various plugins required for eCommerce in WordPress frustrating. There are, of course, other alternatives such as BigCommerce, ShopBlocks and Squarespace. So do your research before you commit, because everyone has different preferences.

## Shopify

### Getting Started

You can get the ball rolling with Shopify for \$29 per month, which will give you immediate access to the eCommerce features you need to get started. It is easy



to set up PayPal within Shopify, and if you do not already have a PayPal account for your business, it will guide you through setting one up. You can also integrate Shopify Payments, which is handled via Stripe or add your Stripe credentials if you already have them. You can even incorporate payments with cryptocurrencies via Coinbase Commerce (make sure to back up your seed key).

Shopify also adds “https” to your shop’s URL, straight out of the box, making your site secure and putting trust in your customers’ minds.

Before you start building your online shop, you may wish to point your chosen domain (www.) to the Shopify servers. This is done under your domain settings. You will need to add some information to the DNS settings in your hosting account (123Reg, GoDaddy etc.). This can take up to 48 hours to properly configure, so it’s worthwhile to set this up early.

There will be a range of tasks to complete, such as company address details, tax set-up, billing details etc.

## **Setting up shipping profiles**

This step is critical to get right early. It can be a bit of a lengthy process if you ship your products worldwide, but once it is done, you should be able to leave it unedited for a while. If you only process orders within your home county, choose the options you wish to provide (Standard, Express, Next Day etc.). You can organise these by weight, price (i.e., spend over x amount and get free shipping), and allocate specific shipping rules to individual products.

## **Your Product Offering**

The next thing to consider before laying out your stall is what exactly your product offering is. Do you have one item or many? Do you have variants or multiple collections of things? Knowing this will help you to select a suitable template for your product offering. There are many free options in the marketplace, which is excellent when first setting out. It is wise to take some time and look at what each theme offers in terms of functionality. There is nothing worse than getting started on a Shopify theme, making it look stunning, to find out later it doesn’t include the functionality you need.

You may find that the free templates are not cutting it when it comes to layout or functionality. In that case, there are several premium themes available in the theme store. 3rd party options are also available, but these can be a bit hit or miss. If you have a bit more of an expendable budget, then the app Pagefly will enable you to build bespoke layouts. There are many people with incredible skills that can build your website for you, dependent on your budget, of course.

## **Laying out your stall**

Ecommerce success relies on a significant focus on design. If you want people to buy your product offering, you need to make it easy. It would be best if you made it easy to find your products, easy to compare products and of course, easy to buy. Grouping variants of items into collections helps shoppers to browse like for like items. If you have an extensive catalogue, you should utilise product tagging to make this process easier to segment your products. Having good quality product images and appealing content throughout your store gives you a professional

appearance that your customers will trust.

## **Marketing within Shopify**

### **Email Marketing**

Shopify has a built-in email marketing function which is easy to use and prompts you whenever there are major shopping holidays, such as Black Friday, suggesting activities to carry out during the lead up to these times, allowing you to plan and build a marketing campaign. You can link MailChimp to Shopify, but it does require a bridging app called ShopSync.

### **Google Ads**

You can link your Google Ads account to Shopify and build ad campaigns from the marketing dashboard.

### **Facebook and Instagram**

Connect your Facebook and Instagram accounts and quickly build your social shopping experience. This will allow you to tag products in your social posts, which will link directly to your store, making it even easier for people to shop with you.

### **Good ol' Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)**

When you create a product, make sure you scroll down to the bottom of the page and edit the metadata using the "Edit Website SEO" section. Here you can dictate what the product or page will look like in a search engine result. You can edit title, description and the URL. Make sure to utilise both brand names and keywords when creating this detail.

## **The Shopify App Store**

There may be some features you want to include that are not available out of the box. Want to create an army of affiliates? You can find a range of third-party apps, making it easy for you to onboard and support your affiliate partners. You can design your invoices and order forms using the Order Printer Pro plugin and automate your reviews with Yotpo, as well as so much more.

## **Build it, and they will come!**

Some of the best SEO practitioners out there cannot help you get organic traction to your site unless you find your niche in the market; solve a problem that you know people seek to resolve and that others are not already solving. There is just so much out there! You will need to get people to your site by marketing your store in different ways. For this, you are going to need one of two things: money or time. If you have a budget for marketing, use it wisely. If not, you would be best suited to talking to your network and sharing your store to those that may be keen to purchase your products. Once you have validated the need for your product offering, you can focus on applying a budget specifically for brand awareness and conversion campaigns

# Effective Networking

Ryan Ferrara, Snuggeries



Networking is a fundamental part of, not only growing your business but yourself, your confidence and of course, your contacts (or network!). However, there are some critical factors to consider when identifying which method of networking is best for you.

Below, I outline the immense benefits networking has to offer and some tips to consider to ensure your relationship with networking is a positive one.

There are many dedicated groups for networking; some are more tailored & structured, and others more informal. Either way, there is no 'right or wrong', and identifying the types that are better suited for you and your business is key.

In addition, some groups only allow one person from each business category, for example: if you are a plumber and you 'buy' the seat for that category, then no other plumbers will be able to join. Potentially, this results in all the plumbing referrals coming to you! Others, however, allow multiple business from the same category, which means sharing leads with plumbing 'competitors'.

At first, you might think that being the only plumber is a good strategy, as you'll receive all the business, but I'd like to bring some points to your attention.

Being exclusive does have its benefits; however, in these types of groups, there are usually a couple of 'commitments' that you have to make:

1. Attendance is everything. If you're not in attendance every week then you are in danger of losing your category space.
2. Exclusivity means you could be really busy, but not necessarily productive. The expectation of bringing a customer lead to the group every week can be a demanding commitment for members, causing some to bring leads that are not qualified. These types of leads can take up a lot of time, keeping you busy following up. It's important to understand the depth of each lead shared, in order to dedicate the appropriate amount of time to 'hotter' leads.

Groups with multiple members in a single category will actively endorse collaboration, which I believe is a vital pillar for success. Being able to build relationships is one of the most powerful assets you can have in business and building relationships with those who understand your industry can be very powerful indeed! It can help you to improve your offering; enabling the possibility of redirecting leads to trusted 'partners' when you are over capacity or do not have

the expertise (and they can do the same for you); or the ability to collaborate on larger jobs where more resource is needed.

Therefore, going to a group with an open mind is extremely important, you don't know who you're going to meet, and how you could positively impact each other. Go with this mindset every time and your opportunities for growth will be huge. Below I have summarised my best networking tips, and some takeaways for you to consider:

### **1. Research**

Do your research into the groups before you attend. Some groups allow you to look at the attendee list of the previous event, so request this if you can, so that you have an idea of who will be 'in the room'. I would also recommend asking anybody you know that has previously attended for their opinion.

### **2. Start casual**

Networking can be daunting. Therefore, I recommend attending the more casual events to begin with. These events have a low cost of around £5; and are an excellent way to ease yourself into the world of networking.

### **3. Confidence**

Be confident from the start. You're going to be thrown in at the deep end, however, whilst you are there be sure to mingle and introduce yourself to people straight away. Believe it or not, this will help calm your nerves.

### **4. Give it time**

The best relationships take time; it's a fact of life, but it is true. Remember, relationships are influential in business, therefore always adopt and stick with a 'long-term' mindset.

### **5. Cost tracking**

Keep track of your costs, not just for the weekly fee, but also the time. Each week you could find yourself networking every day for three hours with no results. It's essential to keep track of this to ensure the ROI is worth the money & time spent.

### **6. Make connections**

Connect with each person you speak with, remember their name or take their business card, connect with them on LinkedIn or simply send them a quick email later in the day to thank them for their time. If you didn't manage to speak to someone connect anyway and let them know you would like to next time!

### **7. Create a 'hit list'**

This is a list of the people you wish to meet in the next session. This might be somebody you couldn't get round to speaking with before.

### **8. Work the room**

Ensure you 'work the room' and be welcoming to new members. When networking, you're meeting new people, and you never know what their business/story is, so ensure you talk to as many people you can, and bring new people into your conversation(s) with fellow attendees wherever possible.

## **9. Plan**

Schedule the events you want to attend in your diary and ensure they're 'locked in', so you don't double book yourself.

## **10. Be prepared**

For a short time, you will be in the spotlight, explaining who you are and where you're from, therefore make this memorable and keep it short & snappy. Be clear with your message, and don't waffle. Come up with a short bio beforehand and practice it, so you project confidence.

In summary, networking will always be a key part of gaining new business and it's an endeavour that can be very lucrative, not just for sales but for personal and professional growth.

# Effective Outsourcing

Michelle Kaberry, Pink Spaghetti



Once seen as a cost-cutting exercise, outsourcing is now seen as a tried and tested route to business growth, and is a growing trend for companies — especially micro-businesses.

Few people know what it's like to own a small business unless they've actually done it. The bottom line is: you need vision, passion and a 'can do' attitude to create something from scratch. You must also maintain a high level of dedication and a tireless work ethic to keep a small business going. As a result, many small business owners have a hand in every aspect of their operation.

However, there are two key times in your business when you should really consider outsourcing:

## 1. Time

The first is when you are running out of time. You have more on your to-do list than time in your day, but you don't have the funds available to bring on staff or spend time training. This can cause frustration, lack of progression and feelings of being overworked.

## 2. Grow

The other time is when you want to grow your business.

People set up businesses because they have a passion for something, or they are brilliant at something. And if you stick at that, you will be far more productive, grow a more successful business and be happier. Many people don't realise that to run their business; they need to spend 60% of their time doing things they are not so great at or don't like doing.

So, outsource...

### Repetitive tasks

If it is repetitive, you can efficiently train someone else to do it, freeing up your time. Chances are these repetitive tasks are not a good use of your time and actually prevent you from developing your business.

Scenario: You keep cleaning the same things, day after day, but nothing extra gets done. You get a cleaner in to do the daily stuff, and you also get to clean under the beds and sort the wardrobe at the same time.

## **Things you don't know how to do but know you need to do**

You know you need to research and utilise: But maybe you don't know where to start, so you procrastinate over the task. However, you may find if you actually did them, they could take a long time to get your head around.

Scenario: You suspect email marketing, utilising your Facebook page effectively, and leveraging Twitter are likely to improve your business, drive sales, etc. We see people who have had these on their to-do lists for months or years, and a quick bit of research about outsourcing, and handing this over, can move your business forward.

## **Things you don't want to do**

While you are more than capable of keying in names from business cards to use for marketing, you put it off because it is boring and time consuming. You can detail the type and amount of expense from your receipts to keep your accounts in order, but it stays on your list.

Scenario: We see businesses that have bin bags full of receipts, putting off these accounting tasks until they build to an overwhelming degree. Yet for the average small business, just half an hour of outsourcing a month would keep them on top of their finances.

You don't want to work 24 hours a day, right?

There are tasks that other people are better at, which can be done more efficiently and in a more cost-effective way. This gives you the time to grow your business, or have some free time.

What reason is there not to outsource? Apart from a reluctance to delegate, why wouldn't you?

## **Fear of delegation**

We know people feel:

- They can't afford it
- They will lose control
- People won't do it as well as they can
- It is quicker to do it themselves than try and explain it

But if you follow the rules of WHAT to outsource — repetitive, don't know how to, don't want to — then you will be outsourcing the RIGHT things.

## **You can learn to delegate**

Here are our top tips:

- Make sure you agree on the ground rules at the beginning
- Communicate effectively



- Agree to a budget
- Make sure you work with people who keep you in control as a business owner, supporting, not replacing
- Choose who you want to work with and make sure they are reliable, efficient and trustworthy. Do they communicate well?
- Start by giving them one small task to test the water and make sure they listen

It will be easier than you think!

We will leave you with this final thought...

Here at Pink Spaghetti, we unravel the bitty, time-consuming small stuff, giving you freedom to sort the big stuff and enjoy life. Well, now you've found us, you can heave a sigh of relief, as we are here to help. Nothing more, nothing less; we are quite simply that 25th-hour busy people like you so badly need.





# Final Thoughts

I have said it for some time now, the “business” side of being an Entrepreneur is the easiest bit, having met hundreds of founders since we launched the Shifties community, yet it is so often the focus and that makes sense because you are starting a business, right?!

Well, I want to pre-warn you that the real focus for those successful in the world of Entrepreneurship is the journey of becoming the best Entrepreneur you can be: there is no separation of the best brands in the world from those that lead them to fulfil their missions. Just running a business is not a profitable approach, you would have to get used to very long hours, disappointment on repeat and constantly questioning why your business isn't moving as fast as you intended it to.

Life as a business owner is so much more than that, just consider for a moment how special the opportunity of starting your own business is! With the alternative likely being employment or self-employment, looking at average earnings of £40,000 (before tax!), versus creating a business as an asset that has the potential to return continuous income regardless of the time you spend on it. That is a huge shift in mindset; to have the power to create this for yourself and those around you.

This is an open invitation to you: I hope that reading this book, which we are actively co-writing as we explore our own journey in Entrepreneurialism, activates you, allowing you to explore what else you could be doing to expand your knowledge, network and opportunities in our community.

We have a clear focus here and one mission: to encourage business owners as they achieve their growth goals with a community dedicated to **connect, learn and grow together**.

It is an Entrepreneur's network and self-development that sets them apart from others. Focus your energy on these areas before anything, and the opportunities for your business will flood in as a direct result.

*Alex Hughes*

Entrepreneur, business owner & founder of Shifties



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