

3 Ways Perfectionism Kills Your Business (and How To Overcome It)

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If you look at some of the most successful people in history, you'll likely find some stories that suggest a slightly detrimental tendency towards perfectionism.

Steve Jobs required employees to get his approval on every single detail of the original Macintosh. Film director Stanley Kubrick broke a world record when he shot the same scene of *The Shining* a whopping 148 times. And even singer James Brown would fine his backup vocalists if they dared to miss a beat.

While a nearly obsessive attention to detail and an unwillingness to accept failure likely aided in their careers, at some point or another, it became the very thing that threatened their success. Because when perfectionism is left unchecked, it inevitably morphs into a paralyzing and destructive force.

As a recovering perfectionist myself, I know firsthand what it's like to be mentally ruled by that dreaded yet exhilarating feeling that there's no option but to get it right. Having little room for mistakes means that every time something goes off track, you feel an obscene amount of pressure to fix it before the world burns to ashes.

Of course, we know logically that all humans make mistakes, and the world won't actually end if something doesn't go according to plan. But in those moments, it sure feels like it

– and boy is it exhausting.

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Over the past few years, I've learned to accept that I'm a human being who makes mistakes. Not only that, my moments of resistance can actually be a blessing in disguise. But it took some trial and error with my business before I realized just how much perfectionism was sabotaging me. I had to go deep and do the inner work of rewiring my subconscious story around flaws in order to fully resolve my perfectionism and let it go for good.

I wasn't alone in this internal fight. Perfectionism seems to be a common plague among even the most successful high-level executives and thought leaders I work with. And even though they'll swear up and down that this need to be perfect is what drives their success, once we resolve it, they're not only more fulfilled in the workplace, they're more productive too.

If you're struggling with perfectionism in your business, here are three ways it can kill your success (and how to overcome it):

1. Perfectionism inhibits productivity

When you're stuck in the grip of perfectionism, the fear of making a mistake can freeze you into inaction. You put off big projects and procrastinate on important tasks because you want to avoid the possibility of messing up.

Not only does this cause you to miss out on opportunities that might not come around again, but it also brings your momentum to a screeching halt. Suddenly everything feels overwhelming, and you can't seem to make any progress.

Tip: The best way to overcome this is to become more aware of your patterns and symptoms when perfectionism is kicking in. How do you usually behave? Do you fire off tasks to your team without thinking them through? Do you hide away in your office and ignore calls from your loved ones until things get done?

Once you get clear on what signs to look out for, make a list of what action steps you'll commit to taking whenever you see those signs popping up. Maybe it's something as simple as setting deadlines and committing to meeting them even if the end result isn't perfect.

After experimenting with these action steps, do a quick audit of the outcome. Take notes on what worked, what didn't and what you could do better next time. Make mistakes and actively learn from them by creating a plan to improve.

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2. Perfectionism puts too much on your plate

If you're a self-proclaimed perfectionist, you likely have an insidious belief that no one can do it as well as you can. That old saying, "if you want something done well, do it yourself," is practically your mantra.

However, this mindset will only drain your mental and physical energy and make it less likely that you'll actually accomplish your goals. When you consistently take on more than you can handle (and fail to realize your own human limitations), you run the risk of burning out, which can be fatal to your business.

Tip: Whenever you're tempted to take on more than you realistically can, ask yourself if the task is absolutely necessary for your business or whether it can be delegated or outsourced. Even if no one can do it as well as you can, how

much imperfection are you willing to accept to have more energy, time, and vitality? If there's someone who can do a low-priority task that will save you tons of hours but only produce about 70% of the quality, is it worth getting off your plate?

Focus on high priority, high importance items and learn to let go of the rest. You'll be surprised how much more you can achieve when you aren't trying to do everything yourself.

Related: 4 Ways to Send Your Perfectionism Packing

3. Perfectionism prevents necessary growth

If you want to reach new heights in your business, you have to be willing to grow and change. But perfectionism can keep you permanently stuck.

When you pretend that you've got it all under control (even if you don't), you close yourself off to new opportunities and ideas. You become resistant to change and unwilling to stretch outside your comfort zone. And eventually, your business hits a plateau.

Personally, I've found solace in the realization that it's not the mistake that matters so much as how I choose to deal with them.

See, the problem with perfectionists is that we actually make mistakes all the time, but we often fail to acknowledge them. Instead, we sweep them under the rug and try to act like they never happened.

But the truth is, our mistakes are a natural and necessary part of the learning process. And if we want to be successful, we need to learn how to embrace them.

Tip: Rather than trying to pretend like your mistakes never happened, own up to them. Recognize that once a mistake is made, only you are in control of how you deal with it. You can choose to engage in destructive behavior (i.e. go off into a frenzy, beat yourself up, blame others, etc.), or you can choose to face the problem and solve it without attaching yourself to negative emotion.

Quitting perfectionism requires a healthy dose of self-trust, and that starts with trusting that you're perfectly capable of learning from and resolving any mistakes you make.

So acknowledge the mistake, forgive yourself for making it, find the lesson, and take responsibility for mending what was broken. Continue reconnecting to your deeper why, your Northern Compass, which will inevitably also grow your brand and business. The more you do this, the more you'll trust in your ability to handle whatever obstacles come your way.

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