3 Ways to Plan for the Future & Avoid Getting Caught in the Weeds

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Most business owners wear a lot of hats. One day, you get to be the salesperson. The next day, you are the HR department. By the end of the day, you are the operations manager. Most entrepreneurs love the variety. We like to be the ones who get to solve the problems. We wear it like a badge of honor and tell everyone how we are busy all the time.

If this leads to a lack of strategic leadership, it will hold your business back. Working on the business requires a different mindset than working in the business. When we work *in* the business, we handle those daily tasks and jump around to solve problems that emerge. We enjoy when others come to us for help and advice in solving the daily issues.

Working *on* the business is different, however. It involves thinking about the business at a higher level. Instead of working on the individual problems, it means we think strategically about the long-term direction of the business. We plan for the future. We look at our value proposition. We evaluate competitors and emerging risks, and we search for potential opportunities to grow and improve.

This strategic thinking is often the first thing that gets disregarded when we get too busy. Instead of seeing the business from a high level, we get caught in the metaphorical weeds. We get stuck on the daily tasks. They consume our time and don’t leave any time or energy to be able to develop

strategic plans or think creatively about the future.

But there are ways to make sure you don’t get too stuck in the details. You can implore these three tactics to pull away from the grip of the daily grind.

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1. Block out time

You need to make time for it. Don’t assume you will be able to get it when everything else is finished. There will always be additional tasks to complete. Instead, find ways to block out your schedule. Make sure others know how important it is that you shouldn’t be disturbed unless there is an emergency. Define what constitutes an emergency.

I learned early on to protect this time. Giving specific instruction to staff can help. I would outline what would and wouldn’t constitute an emergency. If someone is hurt, knock on my door. If someone wants to ask for a day off, it’s better to send an email. If the building is on fire, come get me. If a customer is asking for a custom design, get the details and schedule time to talk through it later.

By doing this, you will establish the mindset that strategic planning is important. It isn’t something to do when everything else is done.

2. Create systems to run the daily tasks

When you are the main problem solver and decision maker, you are required to be available. By establishing systems to run the operations of the business, you create the structure for the business to run without your constant involvement.

You can provide guidelines on how to make decisions. Decision trees are a great way to outline the process you use to make decisions. These can be passed along to staff, and you can train others on the fine art of choosing the right step.

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You can also hire others to take on tasks that you currently own. These can be passed to capable employees who follow the steps in your process to achieve a similar result as you would. The systems help create the right structure for the business. They provide the blueprint to effectively run the business, and they give you the ability to step away without the quality taking a hit.

3. Get help

If you aren't able to plan strategically by yourself or don't have enough experience to do it effectively, there are resources available to help.

You can create a board of directors or get involved in local business groups that help provide insight and guidance to each other. You can hire a consultant, you can include key people in the organization, or you can find a volunteer group such as SCORE.

You don't have to do it all yourself. If you are great at running the business but not so great at pulling yourself out of the weeds to look ahead, find others who can help in that area. Being able to step away from the day-to-day tasks of the business and focus on the vision for the company is important. It can mean the difference between a business plateauing versus growing.

Learn how to block out time. Make this planning as important as anything else you do for the business. Create the right

systems and structure so others can take over many of the tasks that bog you down. Get help from others if you need it. If you are able to do this, you will start to see the business in a new light. It will give you direction and will also give your staff direction.

Follow these steps to avoid getting caught in the weeds and failing to see the future of the business. Without a focused effort, you won’t be able to escape the daily grind, but with the right approach, you will be able to develop the strategic plan to push your business to the next level.

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