

Grief Forced Me to Step Away From My Company. These 5 Systems Made It Possible.

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

When you're running a business, taking time off usually means planning weeks (or months) in advance. You take great pains to line up coverage, prep clients, schedule out social media posts and hope nothing unexpected comes up while you're away.

But life doesn't always give you a heads-up. Recently, I had to step away from my company for a full two weeks after losing my dad to brain cancer. He had been fighting the disease for a while, but when things rapidly progressed and he entered hospice care, I knew I needed to be fully present with him and my family. Planning a funeral, getting all of his affairs in order, being there for my loved ones and going through my own grieving journey led to an emotionally overwhelming two weeks. And for the first time in my entrepreneurial career, I was able to fully step away, and the business kept running.

Money still came in. Clients were taken care of. Social media didn't miss a beat. Proposals kept going out. And it reminded me why I built my business the way I did.

Whether you're in the middle of a personal crisis or just in need of a vacation, you shouldn't have to choose between your life and your business. Here are some of the strategies that made it possible for me to unplug for two weeks, and how you can start applying them to your own business right now.

Related: [Why You Still Need to Take Time Off in a Time of](#)

Crisis

1. Build a team you trust not only to “do,” but to think

It's one thing to have a team that completes tasks. It's another to have people who can anticipate problems and come up with solutions before you even know there's a fire. The real MVPs on my team are more than doers, they're thinkers. They know our goals, understand our clients and make decisions confidently. If your team constantly waits for your approval before they take action, you're the bottleneck. And I've been that bottleneck before.

Empower your team to act in your absence by encouraging independent thinking and clearly defining what success looks like. When I had to step away, I didn't have to worry about whether things would fall through the cracks, because my team had it handled. That kind of leadership and trust is priceless.

2. Systematize everything

If your business only works when you're working, you don't have a business – you have a job. One that owns you. The key is to get everything (especially the knowledge in your head) into systems your team can access. In my business, we use a work management platform to manage all of our client projects. Every deadline, deliverable and task is visible. So when someone needs to step in (like when my project manager went on maternity leave last year), it's seamless.

Start documenting your processes now. It doesn't have to be fancy. A shared Google Doc with step-by-step instructions works just fine. If you ever want to scale or sell your business, documented systems are essential.

3. Delegate outcomes, not just tasks

Entrepreneurs are notorious for micromanaging. I've been there, thinking I could do it faster or better because I've been in marketing for 20-plus years. But that mindset limits growth.

Instead of assigning tasks, delegate goals. Give your team the "what" and let them figure out the "how." In doing so, it builds confidence, encourages ownership and often leads to better results than you would've achieved on your own. Making this shift will let you focus on the big picture and step away when needed because your team knows how to move the ball forward.

Related: Delegating Doesn't Mean You Lose Control – It Means You Maximize Your Impact. Here's How to Do It Effectively.

4. Automate everything you can

When I was out, my business's billing ran automatically through an online payment processing platform. Our emails continued going out weekly through our CRM system. Social media posts were scheduled out a month in advance. All of that happened without me lifting a finger.

That's the power of automation. You don't need a massive tech stack. Just look at where you're repeating tasks and ask, "Can this be automated?"

Think about:

- Online scheduling tools for appointments
- Recurring invoices and ACH billing
- CRM email sequences to nurture leads
- Social media schedulers to stay consistent

These tools won't just save you time, they'll also give you peace of mind.

Related: [How I Automated 50% of My Business Tasks and Scaled Without Hiring More Employees](#)

5. Practice being absent

This one might sound strange, but it's essential: Learn how to be gone. If your business can't function without you, then it's not truly scalable. Take small steps by blocking off time where you're intentionally unavailable. Skip a meeting or take a few hours off in the middle of the day. Start slow if you need to, but start.

Eventually, when something unexpected happens – or when an exciting opportunity comes along – you'll be able to step away without everything falling apart. Entrepreneurship is about freedom. Not just financial freedom, but time freedom too. It doesn't matter if it's a personal emergency or just a trip you've been dreaming of taking; you should be able to step away from your business and trust that it will keep moving in your absence.

I didn't build this kind of business overnight. It took years of trial and error, delegation, automation, and growing a team I could count on, which wasn't easy. But I can tell you from experience: It's worth it. Because when life happens – and it will – the last thing you should have to worry about is whether your business will survive without you.

When you're running a business, taking time off usually means planning weeks (or months) in advance. You take great pains to line up coverage, prep clients, schedule out social media posts and hope nothing unexpected comes up while you're away.

But life doesn't always give you a heads-up. Recently, I had to step away from my company for a full two weeks after losing

my dad to brain cancer. He had been fighting the disease for a while, but when things rapidly progressed and he entered hospice care, I knew I needed to be fully present with him and my family. Planning a funeral, getting all of his affairs in order, being there for my loved ones and going through my own grieving journey led to an emotionally overwhelming two weeks. And for the first time in my entrepreneurial career, I was able to fully step away, and the business kept running.

Money still came in. Clients were taken care of. Social media didn't miss a beat. Proposals kept going out. And it reminded me why I built my business the way I did.

The rest of this article is locked.

Join Entrepreneur+ today for access.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/grief-forced-me-to-step-away-from-my-company-these-5/491663>