

Past the Start-Up: Managing the Growing Business or Making the Most of the Manager's 15-Hour Day

Trina Hoefling

You think you can breathe now: project deadlines are regularly met without crisis, you have a reasonably healthy business mix, your newest sales associate has been on board five months and is doing well, and chamber members have already heard of your business before you have to explain. Good news, right? Absolutely. B. . .U. . .T. . . .As the business succeeds and grows, entrepreneurs need to shift their attention to different issues from those needed to get the business started.

You carry a heavy load in leading the continued profitable performance of the growing business. You are always under pressure to get everything done, and the "old way that always worked" is perhaps causing strain. Following is a **Checklist for Symptoms of Strain** on the entrepreneur as the business grows. *Check any which apply to you [or a busy entrepreneur you know].*

- The **15 -18-hour day**. "We are so busy mopping the floor that we never get to turn off the spigot."
- A **worry overload**, showing up in sleeplessness, inability to relax, gastrointestinal disturbances, or other mild-but-irritating health problems.
- Lack of forward planning**. Day-to-day problems converge and keep you bogged down.
- Unmet deadlines**, with customers, employees, friends, or families.
- Employee or partner indifference** on the front line. "How can this happen when we've always been all for one and one for all? They just don't make 'em like they used to."
- Crisis management**. Most problems are emergencies. This is a tricky one because it temporarily addresses indifference ("We have to pull together to pull this one out!"), but doesn't last beyond the crisis.
- Working more** and longer, but **profiting less**.
- Loss of customer goodwill**. These last two are particularly dangerous and frightening, which leads to increased effort, manifesting in more of the earlier Symptoms of strain.

In working with businesses on the move, I often see these symptoms haunting the corners of the offices, as well as the manager's nighttime worries. I also see competent entrepreneurs

with tired arms -- fatigued from trying to keep their arms around the business and keep the strain away from customers and strategic partners.

Your success as an owner in a growing business depends on your ability to meet changing pressures which come with the business' expansion. Following are five **Changing Patterns Needed** in your activities as the business grows. You –

- ✓ Must cut down on routine and repetitive work.
- ✓ Might need to give up some things you "like to do" but which are not very demanding.
- ✓ Emphasize activities that will have a payoff one week to five years away.
- ✓ Determine goals and objectives for the business which are NOT TACTICS and which ARE in line with the anticipated needs of your customers and alliances.
- ✓ Set up systems and procedures by which routine and repetitive work can be handled without close supervision.