



Are You Ready for Growth in 2012?

Imagine one day you wake up, jump out of bed, and are excited about starting your day. You head toward the kitchen to pour yourself a cup of coffee and sit down to breakfast. As you start zoning out while drinking your first sip of java, your excitement turns into anxiousness as you think through all of the things you need to get done that day. An overwhelming realization that you can't possibly get it all done starts to envelop you.

Many small business owners make the mistake of working *in* their business trying to grow it, rather than working *on* their business and planning for growth. As they work in their business, they receive an unexpected avalanche of new business and become easily overwhelmed, primarily because they lack systems and resources. It also occurs with small business owners who have done it all themselves and must start to delegate or outsource in order to keep up with the rising demand of new business.

Ultimately, your small business can only grow to the maximum amount of work you can personally handle. Conquer the overwhelm by using these simple strategies:

- **Plan for growth.** When planning, identify metrics to include your ideal revenue and number of clients. Determine the client or revenue thresholds which will serve as indicators to let you know when to hire additional resources. As you get close to those thresholds, you will easily spot when it's time to add additional support.
- **Systematize specific functions.** Typically, businesses are categorized into marketing, production/operations and administration. Remember to systematize each area by designing specific processes that work even when you're not there. You may be able to streamline your functional areas with automated systems and save the staff for other areas that require human intervention and interaction.
- **Consider staffing alternatives.** Getting the job done does not necessarily mean hiring regular full-time employees. Independent contractors, virtual assistants, temporary agencies and interns may give you the flexibility and cost-effectiveness you need to manage your growth.
- **Invite these potential resources to a networking meeting.** Several things often happen when you identify resources and get to know them before you need them:
 - You're in a better bargaining position because you're not pressured to hire right away leaving you time to make a better choice.
 - You discover that you can use their services for just a couple of hours a week which would help you make your growth plan a reality and keep your budget balanced.

- They will give you ideas about growing your business you have not considered because they have a specialized area of expertise.
- Because you have already identified the areas in your business and the resources you need and when you need them, you have a good idea of how you would utilize their services efficiently.
- Through the process, you will also be growing your network.

By following these simple strategies, you will grow your business with less effort and achieve that big plan for your small business.

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