

7 Clues it's Time to Build Your Team and Hire Help **By Joan Friedlander**

You and your business suffer when you spend time on activities and projects that are better delegated to someone else. If you are serious about growing a profitable, thriving business, one of the things you need is help. And the help you receive needs to be the best you can afford so you can rely on the people you hire. The problem is often this; you are good at what you do and have a hard time letting go. It could be that you are convinced you can't trust others to do things to your standards, or you seem to never quite have "enough" revenue to feel comfortable paying someone else.

As a small business owner your success depends on your best attention, capability and creativity. There comes a point when you do need to stop trying to do everything yourself. It's simply not a recipe for long-term success.

What would it be like if you had the built-in flexibility to accomplish what you want and had plenty time for your top priority activities? What would it be like if you could wake up Monday (and Tuesday) morning and know exactly what you needed to do that day – and actually do it? What would it be like if you had more fun each day, took more time off and made more money as a result? When you stop trying to do everything yourself and build a business team that's right for you, you and your business thrive.

The following are the top seven clues that it's time to hire help and build a quality team of business partners. They are in no particular order here. The importance will depend on the ones that are specifically impacting you.

Clue #1 – You've got a full client load and still insist on doing everything yourself.

This is an easy trap to fall into, especially if you start out on your own and are not only good at what you get paid for, but also at some of the other activities an entrepreneur is responsible for. However, once you get to a point when you are working in the evenings and on the weekend to catch up with administrative activities or to work on special projects, you've taken this do-it-all-yourself strategy too far.

The reasons vary for not taking this important step, and they are enough to keep many from allocating their time and money when the time really is right.

No wonder we're tired! Last year I worked with partners of a multi-media design firm. They are incredibly talented and fairly new in business together. To find out if they were making the best use of their time we made a list of everything the two partners are responsible for, and the actual activities for each area of responsibility. We squeezed the list onto two flip chart-sized pages. When we were done with the process, they both took a look at the lists and said, "No wonder we're tired!" They realized they had taken on certain business responsibilities that neither of them was particularly eager to do and which could be delegated to someone else.

Shortly thereafter, they brought in an intern from a local college and were pleased as punch. First of all, the cost to hire their intern was low. But real bonus was how fast and good he was at what they had him do and how much his work helped them finish projects faster. This year they've hired a second intern and the first intern is now a part time employee. Good for them, good for the interns, good for business.



Clue #2 – You tell yourself you're busy, but it's a good busy.

What are you busy doing? I'm sure that you'd tell me you are busy serving your clients and you're making lots of money. What if I was to suggest that fear is the motivating factor behind your "good" busyness? Perhaps you think you might as well take what you can today because you never know what tomorrow will bring. With this approach, you're right.

- The well of new clients could suddenly dry up and you've got no marketing vehicle in place. Then you have to play catch up and this can be very discouraging, and may take some time to overcome.
- After working hours on end for weeks and months on end you may risk your health. Your body may finally rebel and you could find yourself with a health condition that takes you down and puts your productivity in jeopardy.
- 5 years from now you find that you don't want to work as many hours, but you've put nothing in place to make it otherwise.

Many people discover that busyness is a mask or distraction. When they examine what they're spending their time doing they realize they've taken on too many things and have lost focus. Consider one photographer. When we started working together she was doing children's, wedding, corporate and portrait photography. She was absolutely busy, and so much so that none of these things had much of a chance to bloom. Her reasons? She was chasing money rather than passion and didn't want to turn away "anyone who would pay." In other words, she was hedging her bets. This is what she said a year later:

I've been struggling for several years trying to decide what my core business really is. I have released some of the work I really dislike (I actually say that I don't shoot weddings anymore and actually refer the business out) and it has set me free. I am no longer doing Kids Club or photographing children anymore either. I am concentrating

on corporate events, executive portraits, and publicity materials. With the help of my PR specialist...I am staying focused on corporate and am seeing results.

Other enjoyable opportunities are presenting themselves, as well. I am beginning work on self-publishing a book, have photo exhibits planned, am traveling quite a bit, have joined a gym and go with some regularity...

Clue #3 – You are doing things you hate doing and yet refuse to let go.

Yes, it does happen. You've taken on a project or are doing something in your business that is not a good match for your individual strengths, talents and/or values. What you hoped would help your business grow is making very little difference, but now you feel obligated or trapped because you don't really know what else to do.

The problem is this: you really only have a certain number of hours in the day to get your most important things done, and if you're spending time doing things that you don't enjoy or don't yield a good return on the investment of your time or money, you are wasting your time.

Someone who loves speaking hates writing. I'm working with a client who has a couple of challenges when it comes to writing. First and foremost, she just doesn't like it because she thrives on interaction and movement. Secondly, she has a hard time connecting her thoughts to her writing. She's been working on her business plan for about 6 months and, even with a business plan writer, is spending so much time getting her ideas down on paper – with lots of procrastination in between - that she's stopped herself from taking action. For the first time, she's willing to tell the truth and admit this is not working for her. She's now looking for a copywriter so she can speak and her thoughts can be made coherent in writing. Who knows, perhaps she'll fire her Business Plan writer and find someone who's willing to do more of the actual writing.

Clue #4 – You are neglecting your personal needs and commitments.

We all know about Type A personalities and workaholics, and the pride that seems to accompany such a label. I've got a friend who busts herself for work and is also in school right now. She drives herself to perfection and so she hardly has time to enjoy her friends and she is experiencing migraines on a regular basis. I can't tell you how many times she's canceled weekend dinner plans in the last 2 months for this, that and the other reason. She knows she's doing this to herself and still won't change her tendencies to overwork and drive herself to the ground. I'm afraid she'll burn up before she makes the decision to change how she treats herself, and she's not alone. What's worse, I can't help her.

A 1999 government report found that the number of hours worked increased 8% in one generation to an average 47 hours/week with 20% working 49 hours/week. U.S. workers

put in more hours on the job than the labor force of any other industrial nation, where the trend has been just the opposite. According to an International Labor Organization study, Americans put in the equivalent of an extra 40-hour work week in 2000 compared to ten years previously.

Source: <http://www.stress.org/job.htm>

Just one full day off each and every week can make a difference.

If you see yourself in this statistic, start by taking one full day off (at least) each week in which you do nothing related to your business. You don't think about it (and when you do, you interrupt your thoughts), you don't check email or voice mail nor work on any project having to do with work. Truthfully, 2 full days off in a row is better, but if you're not even taking one, start there. In addition, if you've been so focused on your work that you don't know what to do with your time off so you return the next day rejuvenated, take a look at The Entrepreneur's Sandbox, a course designed for entrepreneurs who struggle to enjoy their free time.



Clue #5 – You put off the projects and activities that are important to the future of your business.

Do you take time for marketing? Do you think about marketing, but never seem to get around to it? Do you have tons of great ideas in the hopper, but no time to develop them? This is a good clue that it's time to build your team or to hire help.

What happens when success derails your core business competency? One of my clients developed a customized business management program for direct sellers in the spa consulting business. Her initial product was so successful that, in time, she had to spend more and more of her time supporting clients and answering questions, or on marketing and sales activities, that she put off allotting quality time she craved to develop enhancements and improvements.

She loves writing programs and also believes that continued growth lies in her ability to set aside time to develop improvements and updates in order to produce upgrades and/or new channel opportunities. Yet, week after week, though she wanted to set aside time for programming, she noticed she was often failed to do so and she started to become discouraged.

At the time we started working together, she'd just hired someone to help out with some administrative activities and to help customer service. But she still had a couple of challenges. Most significant was her sense of guilt for delegating things she didn't really want to do herself. She assumed he hated to do them too. Instead of using this man who she paid to help her, she held onto things and continued to be frustrated because she never got around to programming.

Upon recognizing what she was doing, she accepted my suggestion that the key to changing this dynamic was communication, guidelines and agreement. So she talked to him. She asked if he minded doing some of those things she felt guilty giving him and

learned he didn't. Still, she hesitated to "close the door" while he was there so she could focus on programming. It took just one more conversation to help both of them gain understanding of what they each needed so she could focus on programming for 2 or 3 hours at a time. Now, she's finally doing so and she's much happier.

Clue #6 – You are working more than 50 hours a week.

The biggest challenge entrepreneurs in the creative technical and design professions face is their passion for their work and the unpredictability of the time it takes to complete a project. It doesn't take long before you find yourself working at all sorts of hours, every day of the week, even if you do remember to take time off to spend with your family. Unfortunately, doing so does not automatically equate to business success nor does it make for a happy life.

You may wonder how I can suggest that working more than 50 hours a week is such a big deal in today's business world. After all, everyone else is doing it. It's even worse for many of our corporate comrades. They are lucky if they work fewer than 60 hours a week. At least when you have a job, you can complain about your company. When you're responsible for your schedule, it takes even greater responsibility and more deliberate action to set boundaries around your work schedule.

It starts with your commitment to family, friends and self-care. Sometimes, in order to make better business decisions, you have to start with personal decisions. I'm working with a group of senior managers inside a retail company. These people are used to working 10-12 hour days, 5-6 days a week and have been for years. Though the focus of our work is on their development as leaders in their company they are also, many for the first time, setting personal goals and creating new habits around self-care. Many of them have families and children and recognize that their devotion to their jobs has impacted their ability to be present with the people they love most.

85% of the participants reported an immediate sense of increased well being and personal integrity in just 2 weeks. By focusing on family and self-care first, they've been required to examine how they've been managing their responsibilities and their time at work. Immediately they had a good reason to learn how to delegate more. This is definitely good for them, good for their results, good for their direct reports, and good for the company.

Clue #7 – You haven't taken a vacation in over a year

Yes, I said it. Every person on the planet, and certainly every entrepreneur, needs to take time off from work and business in order to maintain the creative edge required to be successful. One of my first mentors, Jennifer White, author of *Work Less, Make More®*, said that entrepreneurs need to take not just one vacation a year, but 4 a year, about one every quarter. Because we invest so much of ourselves in our business, the

only way to keep ourselves fresh is to disconnect so we have a chance to restore our batteries so we can go back for more. Doing so is good for us and good for business!

Entrepreneurs have many "good reasons" to postpone vacation. You may recognize some of the things that stop you from doing so. Can you hear your own words in any of the reasons below?

1. What if people call me for new business while I'm gone?
2. What about my clients? Will they survive without me?
3. I still have X, Y and Z to do...(the same old someday game)
4. I will when I have enough money?

Sole proprietors are the worst. We've set it up so our business has no life without us. If you don't have help in any way, shape or form, you could get stuck in these reasons for years. Yes, there *is* always something to do. That's the nature of business ownership. And, that's why it's particularly important to take vacations, to let go.

Alone No More: Making use of today's technology and "virtual assistants." You no longer have any real excuse not to take time off. Even if you don't have money for a full-blown travel vacation, you can take a week off without hurting your business. Through the use of e-mail auto-responders and the newest thing in administrative support, Virtual Assistants, you can take time off from your business and still be responsive to clients and prospects that come knocking when you're playing. Once you have the freedom from using these two resources you'll never go back. To find more about Virtual Assistants and how to use technology, link to my article, [Preparing for Growth: Virtual Assistants – What are they and how can I use one?](#) I hired my virtual assistant almost 3 years ago and it's one of the best decisions I made.



About the Author

Joan Friedlander, the head coach and founder of Lifework Business Partners, works closely with entrepreneurs and small business leaders who are scrambling to keep up with the many demands of business ownership. Her coaching programs and products help them make better decisions about how they spend their valuable time so they are able to work fewer hours, spend a greater percent of their time on their core business activities, have more time for personal interests and continue to expand their business. **She specializes in working with entrepreneurs and small business owners in service businesses**, many of whom are running their business from a home office. Her clients include writers, photographers, web developers, HR consultants, financial service professionals and other coaches.

"I work closely with my clients to help them make the important transition from self-employment to business ownership. I'm especially committed to working with my clients to achieve the creative freedom, flexibility and success they want from owning and running a business. As far as I'm concerned, every entrepreneur who makes it helps hundreds of others do the same."

If you'd like more information about her programs link to <http://www.lifeworkpartners.com>. You will find more resources, products and programs to help you scale up to the next level now.