

10 LESSONS FROM A SMALL BUSINESS OWNER



Most people go into business for themselves because they want to be their own boss and believe they can make more money. While this can be true, it doesn't happen without hard work. **Blaise van Hecke** reveals 10 lessons she has learned

Many people like the idea of being a business owner, but they end up just buying themselves a job. Ask yourself why you want to be in business. Being good at something doesn't mean you'll be good at running a business ... but if you work out how to run it effectively, you can create the lifestyle you desire, and none of it will feel like work.

After more than 15 years owning and running a small business, these are some of the many things I have learned:

1 Find your niche

Be specific about what you do - it makes it much easier to sell it to the target buyer. For instance, we are in the business of helping people self-publish their books. There are many people doing the same thing; our point of difference is that we customize the publishing services to suit the customer, while offering top face-to-face service.

2 Have a clear purpose for your business

Once you know what you'll do, you can then make a strategic plan for how you're going to move forward. Think ahead to 12 months, two years and beyond. If you don't have some kind of plan, how will you know where you're going?

3 Invest in yourself

It's a great idea to get some advice and training in how to run a business. You can get advice through your local council, and there are many short courses available, too.

Never stop learning. Whether you have been in your industry for five or 50 years, there is always something to learn, so invest in yourself.

4 Take calculated risks

Playing it safe might be a good way to exist in the business world, but you need to be careful of being superseded by your competition or by new technologies. For this reason, you need to aim to be at the forefront of your industry. Taking risks is very important. They may not always pay off, but if you don't try, you may be left behind.

5 Learn from your mistakes

You may take a calculated risk that doesn't pay off. Don't beat yourself up about this. Learn from it.

6 Surround yourself with experts

As a business owner, you should be spending the majority of your time working on your

business. If you don't like doing your bookkeeping, why waste time doing it? Delegate tasks that stop you from going out there and gaining more business.

7 Attend to marketing every day

Many people think that marketing is making a few pretty brochures and doing a letter drop or creating a website, but these are merely ways to promote your business. Marketing is something that you should live and breathe every day - it's about how you and your staff answer the phone and the presence you have in all avenues of media, online or in print, as well as in your local community.

8 Engage your market through your story

People like to deal with people. How many times have you bemoaned the fact that you can't get a real person to talk to on the phone? You should be accessible and engage people through your story, whether it's your actual business or you as the

face of your business. An ideal way to do this is to write a book about what you do. This is a great way to leverage your story and your business by positioning yourself as an expert.

9 Take action

Nothing happens unless you take action. You can't start up a business and expect the customers to flow in. You need to work on it every day, especially in the first few years when you need to position your business in an already existing market.

10 Work hard but have fun

Anyone who tells you that running a business is easy and that you will make your fortune overnight is delusional. It will get easier, and it can be very fulfilling. If it gets to the point of no longer being fun, get advice on how to improve. Otherwise you may as well go back to working for someone else. **GM2**



Blaise van Hecke is the publisher and co-owner of Busybird Publishing. She is also the author of *The Book Book: 12 Steps to Successful Publishing*. For more information, visit www.busybird.com.au

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