

Work less.
Get smart.
Earn more.

10 strategies
for a more
profitable
solo business

LOVING YOUR OWN COMPANY
flying**solo**

Dear soloist (or aspiring soloist),

This report aims to help you work less, get smart and earn more.

Authored by 10 successful solo business owners, it presents practical and proven strategies for building a more profitable solo business.

We explore ways to work less.

Solo business owners who have mastered how to work less have the following in common: systems working for them, the ability to make fast decisions and the sense to protect their number one asset.

We present tools to help you work smarter.

Smart soloists are always looking for ways to get more done in less time. In this section we show you how to save time using the best online tools, generate business via article marketing and connect with customers more efficiently using a communications toolkit.

We tackle the bottom line, with strategies to help you earn more.

Here we learn from those whose solo business has given them financial freedom. Understanding the value of your time, harnessing the benefits of outsourcing, becoming a specialist and increasing customer value can help you live the dream of being financially free.

Thank you for subscribing to Flying Solo's weekly newsletter. We look forward to delivering inspiration in your inbox every Tuesday morning.

In the meantime, check out what else we're up to at www.flyingsolo.com.au.

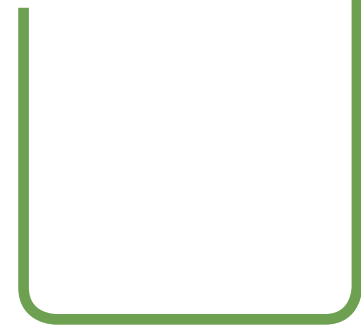
Love your work!

Three handwritten signatures in black ink, reading 'Robert', 'Sam', and 'Peter' from left to right.

The team at Flying Solo

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But rather than copying or forwarding it
to others, we do ask that you kindly direct
them to www.flyingsolo.com.au/newsletter
where they can register for their own copy
as well as access a range of other free
resources we have to offer.*

Systemise and save hours

We all have at least one business process that is consistently inconsistent. It's the one where you just change this bit for one client, this bit for another. My "consistently inconsistent" bugbear was the way I responded to new client intake.

I have a welcome email I send to new clients as part of my new business process. It has the package they signed up for, dates and times, payment options, service agreements - you name it. I would spend at least 30 minutes customising this for each new client, messing around with the format, changing the attachments and so on. Then I went to a workshop on Business Process Improvement and became highly motivated to make this process a whole lot better. Here's what happened.

I learned about creating an email template with fields so all I would need to do is enter the various pieces of information in the right place. I decided to be happy with a standard introduction instead of a highly customised one and I reworded it so that no matter who the client is, the relevant information is contained in the email.

Note: the instructions for creating Email Templates in MS Outlook [are right here....](#)

As if by magic, a half hour job became a five minute job. Even better, if I ever outsource my new client intake procedure to an assistant, all I need to write is a list of the fields that need to be completed and anybody could use the template to welcome my new clients.

I think that's called "future-proofing" I'll bet that many of you can identify a business process like this.

Maybe it's the way you write proposals, where 50% or more of the content is the same. Or perhaps it's how you process new business orders for your consulting services. You can do all these things consistently, and you can save time, money and energy by establishing a process.

The best way to think about creating a new business process for something is to ask yourself: What would I need to put in place to enable someone else to do this?

It's likely that you'll need more than just written instructions - you may also need to reference other documents, filing systems, equipment, people and so on.

While I was on a roll I reviewed/created/updated some more processes, including stationary ordering, telephone answering, invoicing and bookkeeping.

What's on your list? ●

Megan Tough runs Complete Potential, a company that helps businesses solve their strategy and people problems. She loves being a solopreneur, and when she doesn't have her nose to the grindstone, is fulfilling her other passion of fitness and health.

*...ask yourself:
What would I need to put in place to enable someone else to do this?*

Make faster decisions by caring less

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Soloists are generally 110% passionate about what they're doing. Passion is a good thing, right? Maybe not when it comes to effective decision making.

The solo business owner = 110% care factor

They are emotionally involved in every project, passionately committed to achieving results and personally responsible for all decisions. In short, they are determined to get it 100% perfectly right.

Big business client = 95% care factor

Generally they are less emotionally involved in the project, very committed - but not so much passionate - about achieving results and have other people to bounce their decisions off. In short, they want the project completed well and they want it off their desk.

Passion is a good thing, right? Well yes, but sometimes it can strangle action.

Many marketing initiatives I have observed move quickly to start with. The brief is taken, concepts drawn up and drafts delivered for review. Everyone's happy so far.

Then it's only on the last 5% that things start to stall.

Tweaking, reviewing, analysis, adding more information, waiting for the right time or indecision all start to creep in, and the final touches to the project stretch into weeks.

This is an attempt to make sure everything is 100% ready for launch.

The fact is, many a timely campaign or sharp idea has been watered down during these final 'perfection' stages. Rarely will the planets align for the 100% perfect environment and often the final few percent can take longer than the rest put together. So not only will you be achieving very little, you may be making things worse!

In a corporate environment, ranting bosses, fixed deadlines, fast-moving competitors and a slightly lower care factor combine to keep things moving forward - "let's get it out the door!"

With solo businesses on a much tighter budget, it is even more important that you don't waste time and money on something without a return, i.e. wasting it on labouring over the last few percent.

When you care just a little less, things start to happen. You'll become more focused on getting the initiative out the door, you'll make swifter decisions and the project will gain momentum. In short, it will actually happen and you'll be onto the next one.

And let's face it, 95% perfect is 1000% better than a killer idea that sits idly in your ideas folder.

Just pretend you're back in the corporate world with a boss that says "I don't give a X@#\$ what else you've got on, just have something on my desk by Thursday morning!"

I'm all for passion, but too much can sometimes be a handbrake.

Is there something you need to loosen your grip on? ■

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and marketing
communications.*

*It's only on the last 5%
that things start to stall...
the final touches to the
project stretch into weeks.*

As you are the most important asset in your business, healthy living is important to ensure that your business is running to its full potential.

As a soloist, you can get plenty of advice on plenty of things to help your business function, but what can be done to ensure healthy living so that you - the individual - function at 100%?

If you are not feeling 100%, then how can you expect your business to run at 100%? How can you expect your life to run at 100%?

It is easy to slip into some bad lifestyle habits, especially when you are busy. The tricky part is that sometimes it can be hard to recognise that your health might have slipped.

Follow these simple tips for healthy living in life and work.

1. Enjoy a wide range of high quality food

Try and eat a wide variety of foods, including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Generally speaking, the less processed and the fresher something is, the more nutrient dense. It is really good

to minimise the amount of processed foods in your diet.

Also the more food types you can eat the wider the range of nutrients you will get. It is also important to eat 3 to 6 regular meals during the day so don't skip breakfast or lunch, keep the fires burning!

2. Regular exercise

Regular exercise keeps your body finely tuned by increasing your energy levels, improving mental function, reducing high blood pressure and improving your cardiovascular health.

Also try some regular stretching during the day, especially if you spend hours on end in front of a computer. Your back and neck will love you for it.

Both exercising and stretching increases blood flow and so helps to get those creative juices flowing.

3. Minimise stress, have fun and relax

Maintaining high levels of stress in your work and life is a definite recipe for ill health. In simple terms, stress eventually wears out the body.

Plenty of exercise and healthy food is a good start for minimising stress. Remember to have plenty of fun at

work as well in your life. And really try and find some moments in your working time to simply relax.

4. Drink water

Water is an amazingly important part in allowing you to run at 100%. Your body is about 55% to 60% water, and every important thing in your body needs water. Not consuming enough water can lead to headaches and fatigue. Try and aim for 2 litres in regular amounts ever day. If you can only manage to make one healthy living change from my suggestions, make this one.

A lot of us know the things we should do, but we often struggle to take it on board and make it happen. In future articles I will drill down on these simple points and give some good reasons why healthy living is the best business investment you can make.

Note: The information in this article should not replace the advice of a competent health care or nutrition professional, and it is only intended for information purposes only. ■

Justin Zachan runs Jazz Design, an innovative web design studio that develops creative web solutions for small businesses. Justin also has a strong interest in health and lifestyle.

It is easy to slip into some bad lifestyle habits, especially when you are busy.

Make use of smart online tools

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Detailed below is a collection of online tools that will benefit those looking for simpler ways to run their business. I use many of them each day in my own business, while others are simply the industry leaders in their category. Many are free, or at least provide a way of trialing the service without outlaying any money.

"To-do" lists

Stay organised in your small business with one of these free, online "to do" lists.

- Gootodo: www.gootodo.com
Only in beta stage, so you will need to apply for an early-adopter account.
- Taa-da List: www.tadalist.com
A simple yet elegant way of recording your daily tasks.
- Voo2doo Lists: www.voo2do.com
Track time spent and remaining, and even add tasks by sending an email.

Calendars

Calendars have come a long way since that first diary you were given back in primary school. Both the online calendars listed here are free.

- CalendarHub: www.calendarhub.com
Ditch the Filofax and move online, with this functional, easy to use calendar.
- HipCal: www.hipcal.com
HipCal has been getting some strong reviews on Internet forums. Try out their demo account to see why.

Text collaboration

Need to share and collaborate with another party on the text of a document? Stop sending Word documents back and forth and move online with these free alternatives.

- WriteBoard: www.writeboard.com
I can personally recommend this one as I once used it in a consulting project that required the review of over 400 letters. Simple to use and extremely powerful, Writeboard is an indispensable online tool.
- Writely: www.writely.com
Another solid online tool to create and share online documents. With an interface similar to MS Word, even your Mum will get the hang of this one!

Invoicing

Paperwork is tough enough to follow up on at the best of times. Make life a little easier with one of these cost effective invoicing solutions.

- 2nd site for business: www.secondsite.biz
Includes online invoicing, recurring billing, employee timesheets and automated reminders. Deliver invoices via email, or allow your clients to log on and review their invoice history.
- Blinksale: www.blinksale.com
Create service, product or time-based invoices which are automatically emailed to your client. For the more technically minded, use CSS to ensure that the invoices reflect your existing branding.

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clients.*

*If you work offsite, you
could use an online project
management tool to keep
your clients informed of
your progress.*

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Project Management


If you are completing work for a client offsite, you could use an online project management tool to keep them informed of your progress.

- Basecamp: www.basecamp.com
I use this in my own business every day. Integrate it into your own website and your clients need never know that they are leaving your site. The software comes with Taa-Da List and Writeboard already built in. Designed with web developers and small agencies in mind, but adaptable enough to be used by anyone. Small monthly fee, but worth every dollar spent.

File Storage

While hard drive space is cheap these days, we can always do with more. Try an online service for storing files that you need to access while at a client's place of business.

- Xdrive: www.xdrive.com
Store, access, share and backup. Use Xdrive to send those large files to your client that won't squeeze through email filters.
- Openomy: www.openomy.com
1 gigabyte of storage for free, which should be ample for most people who need to share files online.
- OmniDrive: www.omnidrive.com.au
Although this service has not yet officially launched, the buzz around town for it has been so extensive that I included it here just in case you want to check it out. It is Australian after all! ■



Try an online service for storing files that you need to access while at a client's place of business.

Write articles to generate free publicity

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Writing articles and submitting them to the media is an excellent way to get free publicity. Any time you have something published it creates awareness of your brand and enhances your credibility. So how do you go about it?

Sharing expert advice via articles help position you as the authority in your area; the first person people contact when it comes to that subject. People notice. Okay, they might not immediately pick up the phone and buy from you, but consistently being seen says, “you’re in business, you mean business and I’m here when you’re ready to buy”.

The main thing you need to be aware of when writing an article or media release is that you need to have something interesting to say. You need to be unique, differentiate yourself from the others in your field. What is your point of difference? What sets you apart? Once you work that out, that can be your “hook” to gain media attention.

Here are questions to ask yourself in preparation:

What does it mean to others?

Will this information be of benefit or help people in any way? Great to be different but what relevance does it have? Will it have an impact on my customers or general public? Can that point of difference help them?

Do I walk my talk?

Am I credible/believable? Do I have the history or skills to back up my claims? Can I give real life examples in my stories? What research or statistics have I discovered?

Am I a leader in my field?

Do other people back up those claims? Do I have testimonials or awards or the financial credibility to prove I’m successful at what I do? Are there quotes from others endorsing what I do? Will they say great things about me?

Am I truly an expert?

Have I invested in gaining knowledge about my industry, my customers and the competition? Do I have articles on my website on my subject, white papers, special reports or written a book that demonstrates my expertise?

You need to be consistent with your media efforts. Keep in touch with your contacts whether journalists or magazine editors and build personal relationships. Once you’re known as the expert and your personal brand shines through the media will come knocking on your door.

By the way I do write a number of regular articles not only for Flying Solo but other publications and find it to be great PR. I wrote an article for a business magazine a while ago. Someone from an industry association saw the piece I wrote, ran it in their online magazine and from that I’ve secured speaking and consulting work and now present at their annual seminar.

Sue Currie is a business educator and speaker on personal branding through image and media. Sue’s strategies help boost your public profile and increase profits by enhancing your professional image and building brand visibility.

The main thing you need to be aware of when writing an article or media release is that you need to have something interesting to say.

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Write articles to generate free publicity

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Now it might seem like a lot of hard work writing articles particularly if you don't think you have the expertise. But it's like anything, once you start it does get easier as you go along. Why not start with just one article and submit it to as many publications or online magazines as possible?

Begin to develop the habit of writing a regular newsletter with content you can develop further into articles. Post articles on your website, too, as search engines favour sites with plenty of good content. More inevitably creates more business.

Keep hard copies and create a portfolio of your work that you can show potential clients. Consider laminating the articles and display them in your office or printing out the articles and have them bound into a booklet that you can give away as a prize or raffle.

If your article is in a magazine, ask the publisher of the magazine for extra copies. If you know well in advance maybe they can do an extra print run for you and you can give away complete copies of the magazine to prospects.

As a result of creating some buzz for myself as a writer I was asked to write for Flying Solo and I'm now one of their [featured contributors](#). ■



Post articles on your website, too, as search engines favour sites with plenty of good content.

Create a re-useable communications toolkit

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One of the best solo business tools is a 'Communications Toolkit' - a repository of words, images and ideas that's always ready with your best openers, lines, written examples and pictures of your work.

The key is to make sure your Communications Toolkit is firmly rooted in your business plan; you must have internal consistency between what you say you do and what you actually do.

How it works, assuming you have a corporate identity (logo, letterhead, etc):

Step 1: Identify benefits

Write out the main benefits of what you do. These can be up to four or five short paragraphs about why someone would choose your business. This relates to the competitive advantage you have identified in your business planning - the reason your business will survive. Try not to make these stuffy or pompous - express clearly what you would say to someone on the street or over coffee who asked you "what's so good about you then?"

Step 2: Define what you stand for

Using your business plan as a guide (yes, you've been good, haven't you?), rework your vision, mission or business goal as a statement about what you stand for. If you're a soloist, you're already specialising in something. Try to turn the essence of this into a slogan: the source for x/expert in y, or similar.

Step 3: Write an elevator pitch

Next develop an elevator pitch - a short, sharp summary of your business that could be delivered in the time it takes to go a couple of floors in an elevator.

Think hard about what you stand for and what messages you want to reinforce. This is an essential element of your toolkit.

Add to it a couple of your best examples. Practice these every time you talk or write about your business. Soon enough, it becomes second nature and your enterprise starts to sound really grown up!

The trick: think about the values once; roll out the messages as many times as possible!

Step 4: Assemble your best work

Assemble some of your best examples of work; jobs you've done that really demonstrate how you think, act and relate to people. Choose around three of these and write a short case study on each. Write down the client, the job title, the brief and the solution you created or whatever specifications that suit you. Use 'sell' language and keep it lively. Include testimonials if you have them, if you don't, why not [ask for clients for testimonials?](#)

Step 5: Prepare some images

Find some images of those three jobs: examples of the work in progress, examples of the finished product - whatever suits your profession.

Step 6: Collate it together

Collect these together in a Communications Toolkit folder on your computer or filing system.

Jess Tyler is passionate about helping innovators find their voice and about helping clever companies create their own marketing rules.

Think hard about what you stand for and what messages you want to reinforce.

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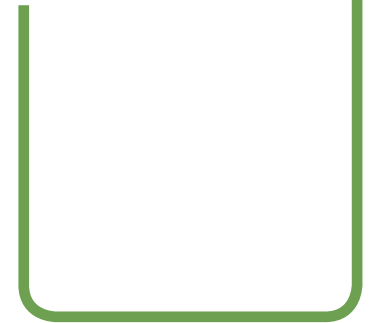
That's it - you have compiled one of your most useful small business tools! Now you're ready to respond when someone calls, emails or writes to you asking for a business synopsis or capability statement. You can choose from this master list of benefits, examples and pictures. Together with a profile of your enterprise, you've got an instant message to send.

You could use your Communications Toolkit to scope out a website for your business. The toolkit would provide the bare-bones structure and internal logic that you need. You could prepare a one-page flyer and attach it to submissions or proposals. Chop it down and use it in advertising. Get a designer to work their magic and turn it into a brochure.

Think you can't do it? Think again. You're the most passionate advocate for what you do. You know your market inside out. You know what your clients want.

It doesn't have to be literary award-winning material. It does, however, need to reflect you and what you stand for. It would help to let someone you trust look over your kit contents. Constructive criticism can unearth some really important issues that may not come up otherwise.

Let it flow and see what you come up with. Often the process is more revealing than it seems! ■



*Think you can't do it?
Think again.*

Boost the value of your existing customers

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Your existing customers are people that already know, like and trust you. By focusing more effort on increasing their total customer value, i.e. the amount of money that they spend with you, you are virtually guaranteed to increase your profits.

There are four ways to do that:

- Retain them for longer;
- Increase the price of the product or service;
- Increase how often they purchase from you;
- Increase the referrals you get from them.

Let's look more closely at each option.

1. Retain them for longer

Many soloists offer a service that pays on a recurring basis. Either the customer is on a regular payment plan, or you receive an ongoing commission from the supplier of the service that you sold to the customer.

Clearly then, if you can ensure that your customer remains happy with the service, they are more likely to stay with it.

For those who have “brokered” a service from a third party supplier, the challenge is to remain in contact with your customer after the sale.

Take the example of a mortgage broker. It's very tempting to just collect the commission from the home loan lender without doing anything. But what happens on the day your customer refinances to another lender and your commission ends?

Having a regular “non-salesy” contact program in place is a good way to ensure your customer can get in touch with you first to explain why they were no longer happy with their current lender (service, interest rate?). This would give you the opportunity to make amends.

2. Increase the price of the product or service

If you are directly providing the service, when was the last time that you increased your prices? Would your customers leave you if you were to raise your prices?

Remember, once a customer has got used to a certain service, then it is actually a big effort to move suppliers - so putting your prices up may not cause the mass exodus you fear.

Don't believe me? Hands up who uses one of the established telecommunications companies even though we all suspect they're not the cheapest? We just don't want to go through the pain of moving. I've recently been offered 30% off my telephone bill by some “never heard of them” supplier - I don't think I'll be taking the risk, thanks!

Peter Griffin believes informative and genuine newsletters are the most powerful marketing tool. He helps small businesses get their newsletter started - even if they only have a few dollars a month and just a few contacts!

...it is actually a big effort to move suppliers - so putting your prices up may not cause the mass exodus you fear.

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3. Increase how often they purchase from you

How can you encourage them to buy from you more often? Do you offer a service that can actually save them money or increase their enjoyment? Think of ways you can package it (e.g. buy one, get the second one for 50% off) to make them buy more, and more often. Can you create a “gold” option of your service, and then up-sell customers to use it?

Also, are there other products and services that you could offer? If you don't want to become an expert in these additional offerings, can you simply organise to receive a referral fee for passing the lead along?

There are lots of other related services that you can promote. For example a pet minding service could promote pet grooming, vet services, home-delivered pet food, dog training, pet equipment and toys, etc.

4. Increase the referrals you get from them

Selling to a referred prospect is a lot easier than selling to a new prospect. The referral already knows that you do a great job for the person who gave you their name, plus he/she probably already has a need for your product or service.

Brian Tracy, the well-known sales trainer, estimates that a referral is worth up to 15 “cold-call” prospects.

But although we know that referrals are great, we don't maximise the number we get. This is a whole topic in itself, and one that we'll return to in another article.

Rather than just focusing on acquiring new customers we should all focus some more time on maximising the value that we can get from our existing customers. Then we can truly be taking advantage of the “Acres of Diamonds” in our own backyards. ■

Can you create a “gold” option of your service, and then up-sell customers to use it?

Understand the true value of your time

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Once you truly understand what your time is worth, in dollar terms, you will work your business more productively and efficiently than ever before. So how do you go about assessing the value of your time?

My first recommendation is start thinking like a solicitor when it comes to how you value and spend your time. In my other life, I'm a solicitor in a prestigious Sydney law firm where what counts is how many billable hours I clock each month.

My time is charged out at \$250 an hour in a minimum of six minute increments. If I so much as pick up and read a one-paragraph letter from another solicitor, my client is billed \$25.

Spend enough time tracking your time like this and you soon develop a very healthy respect for the dollar value of time.

Also, I don't want to have to be at the office for ten hours before I've generated seven that are billable, which means I work very efficiently indeed.

In the process, I've become an expert at avoiding time wasters and unproductive activities. As a result I can usually generate seven billable hours from being in the office for only eight.

Here's how to translate this into your business.

The process

First, decide what level of income you need from your business. For the purposes of our example, let's say it's \$52,000 per year or \$1,000 per week.

Next, decide how many hours you want to work each week. To keep the calculation simple, let's say you're going to work 50 hours a week. Therefore, on average, you need to generate \$20 for every hour of time you spend working in your business.

Remember, not all of your time will be revenue generating (i.e., 'billable')

time. Any business has its share of non-billable time -- those routine administrative tasks that must be done even though they make no contribution to your bottom line.

Now you have a choice. You can either work more hours each week to cover your non-billable time, or you can increase the amount you need to earn from every billable hour. The first option means working longer. The second option means working smarter. Your choice.

Whatever you decide, keep that hourly rate firmly in mind. Every hour of your time is worth \$20, or whatever rate you have calculated for yourself.

Amanda Sarden is an organising consultant, author and speaker who works with businesses to streamline their workplace practices by getting their people organised. Her practical solutions will help you to increase your productivity and your profits.

You can either work more hours each week ... or you can increase the amount you need to earn from every billable hour.

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Understand the true value of your time

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Assigning a value to time wasters

When you are working, as yourself: what's the better use of my time -
- writing an article for this week's newsletter which provides valuable free publicity or stopping every ten minutes each time you get new email and reading it?

Remember, the hour or two you spend writing your article needs to return the equivalent of \$40 in income. Writing articles is the equivalent of free advertising. You can easily generate at least \$40 in income with that sort of no-cost publicity. My articles published in print and online publications bring new website visitors each week. All for about two hours worth of work on my part. No amount of time spent reading email will ever do that.

By having your hourly rate uppermost in your mind at all times, you can always decide what the best use of your time is. Quite simply, it's whatever alternative will make a direct contribution to your bottom line.

Making it balance out

Obviously, no-one's going to step forward and hand you \$20 every time you complete an hour's work. Some weeks you'll put in 50 hours but will only receive \$100 that week - or less! Other weeks, you'll put in the same number of hours and bank \$1,500.

It's a good idea to review your expenditure of time against revenue generated on a monthly or bi-monthly basis to get an accurate picture of how you're tracking. The point is to know what your time is worth so you can ensure you're getting the maximum on your investment that you possibly can.

So, next time you're not feeling particularly motivated to write that article and think you'll maybe just go read the newspaper for an hour or so instead, consider this: Would you rather spend \$20 to read the newspaper at 11.00am on a Tuesday morning or would you rather read it for free at 7:30pm? ■

The point is to know what your time is worth so you can ensure you're getting the maximum on your investment that you possibly can.

Outsource to increase productivity

Outsourcing elements of your solo business can help you double your productivity and buy back important life time.

Much as outsourcing boosts our productivity and improves the overall health of our business, many soloists struggle to let go of the idea of being everything to everybody. As a result, they don't have the time or energy to apply to their key strengths.

When starting out as a soloist over five years ago, I suffered the hangover from the employee mentality where doing a job meant completing every aspect.

After transitioning into consulting then finally my own business, I was still trying to work this way. Initially it was exhilarating; learning new skills, and taking on areas I'd previously avoided... bookkeeping work mostly.

After four years I realised that my lack of skill was holding back my business. Try as a might to keep on top of things, I just found much more stimulation in new client sales, networking, creating new programs, marketing, optimising my website, thinking strategically about my business and being a mum. All the things that fitted my skill set.

But eventually the cracks started to show. It was time to do a cost benefit analysis.

Here are the steps for you to follow:

- Make a list of all the tasks in your business that you are poor at -be really honest.
- Break down how many hours you spend on each task weekly
- How much does this cost your business (hours x your hourly rate*)?
- Does this represent value to the business?
- How could your time be better spent?

* Remember you might pay yourself a certain hourly rate, but what do you bill yourself out at? A consultant charging \$2000 per day is \$250 per hour. This is the lost opportunity cost and should be used for your calculation here.

After completing this exercise, I determined that my 10 to15 hours on bookwork, chasing up bad debtors, paying bills, completing the BAS and issuing invoices represented gross inefficiency.

So I went in search of a specialist. My bookkeeper can do in four hours what took me 15. At \$25 an hour this

represents awesome value. Not only does it free me up to generate more business, the heavy weight of guilt is no longer upon me. Each week, month and quarter, I receive a breakdown of the business and can really make decisions like a business owner. Instead of being bogged down in the detail.

Seven months later and I'll never look back. We have doubled our business. I have just engaged a part time PA to systemise my client service protocols and handle new client enrolments. Again this has freed me up further to focus on business development.

I am still a soloist, I simply use the services of other soloists to grow my business.

There are specialists in every area you could think to outsource:

- IT & web solutions
- Marketing
- Bookkeeping
- Secretarial
- Advertising
- Sales
- PR
- Travel
- Service
- Branding

The list goes on. The key to maximising the growth of your business through this process is identifying your key strengths and applying the extra time and energy there. ■

Summer Nelson is a strategic sales & communication specialist. Her passion is helping people change their lives for the better.

I determined that my 10 to15 hours on bookwork, chasing up bad debtors, paying bills, completing the BAS... represented gross inefficiency.

Turn yourself into a specialist

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When it comes to working smarter we shouldn't overlook niche marketing and the benefits of positioning yourself as a business specialist. Here are five compelling reasons to do just that.

1. Business specialists have opinions

As you become immersed in your area of speciality, so you develop strong opinions. These opinions may be about a particular area within the scope of your work or they may be about the circles within which you operate.

For example, if you're a retailer, your opinion may be about the products you sell, issues concerning the people you sell to, or issues to do with being a retailer.

The point is, opinions matter. People value your opinions - your customers, your contacts, your network, the media. Speak up about your views and before too long you will be approached for opinion.

Ponder for a moment: Your customers, your contacts, your network, the media... all approaching you for your opinion. How does it feel?

2. As an aid to generating referral

In simple terms, for referrals to be generated, people need to know what you do and who you do it for.

By establishing yourself as a specialist in a given field, you make it easier for acquaintances, friends, fans and advocates to talk about you.

Got trouble with your feet? Need work on your gums? Want to get more clients? Who you gonna call?

3. Helps maintain focus

Focus is fabulous. Henry David Thoreau had it right all along. So if you'd like to "meet with a success unexpected in common hours" you'll give it your attention. By becoming a specialist, focus moves from being an optional extra to standard equipment. You simply have no choice.

4. Business specialists command a premium

Recently in a crisp little surgery with art on the walls and James Taylor playing on the stereo a very nice man in white Birkenstock sandals spent 40 mins prodding around in my mouth. It cost me \$500.

I am not complaining, I'm merely illustrating a point: If you dedicate yourself to your area of speciality and over time, truly become a specialist, you can charge a premium for your work.

5. You'll open a door to serial-specialism

Once you have tasted the benefits of becoming a specialist, you're likely to see opportunities for more. A good place to start is to look at your current client base and search for specialised commonalities in the work you do.

A valuable exercise can be to ask the question of clients: What do you get from working with me that you did not anticipate at the outset? ■

Robert Gerrish is the founder of Flying Solo, a small business coach and a small business speaker. He is the co-author of Flying Solo - How to go it alone in business and supports soloists as a coach, speaker and writer.

...if you truly become a specialist, you can charge a premium for your work

Flying Solo

We hope you enjoyed the report.

So what else does Flying Solo have to offer? Here's a summary...

Flying Solo: The website

FlyingSolo.com.au is Australia's online community for solo business owners.

If you are one of Australia's million soloists or have dreams to strike out on your own, you will find inspiration and advice amongst Flying Solo's 300+ articles, which have been written with you in mind. Fresh entries by our team of experts are published every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

To see what all the fuss is about, visit www.flyingsolo.com.au

Flying Solo: The newsletter

12,000 other people across Australia have signed up to the newsletter, so you are in great company. You'll receive yours via email every Tuesday morning.

Flying Solo: The book

Flying Solo - How to go it alone in business

Written by Robert Gerrish and Sam Leader, *Flying Solo - How to go it alone in business* is the complete guide to breaking out on your own and gives you the tools you need to plan and start your own solo venture, or totally overhaul and rejuvenate one that's been ticking along for years.

Combining motivational and practical advice, *Flying Solo* explores the habits and behaviours of successful soloists; explodes some of the myths of marketing, time management and networking; and explains how to thrive as an independent professional.

Published by Allen & Unwin, *Flying Solo - How to go it alone in business* is available through all good book stores at the ludicrously low price of A\$19.95 (inc GST), or [order online now](#).



"Packed with sound advice and written with a light touch, Flying Solo is a breath of fresh air for anyone trapped in career hell. A stirring and sane manifesto for working - and living! - better in the 21st century."

Carl Honoré, author of *In Praise of Slow*

"There's something magnetic about passionate people. You can feel it in the words they write down, in the suggestions they make, in the advice they give. Robert Gerrish and Sam Leader are just such people, and Flying Solo is just such a book. If you're on your own, and not sure what's up next, read this book and wake up to the possibilities it presents. Good job, Robert & Sam!"

Michael Gerber, author of *The E-Myth*