



**Different thinking**  
**for changed outcomes**

## **The many roles of a business owner**

One of the biggest challenges business owners face when it comes to productivity is dealing with the sheer volume of tasks they need to perform in order to effectively run their business.

One solution to the problem is to identify and then give priority to high payoff activities (The activities that have the greatest impact in terms of realizing your goals) However whilst many business owners understand and acknowledge the importance of this they commonly respond by saying that "with everything I have to do, there just never seems to be enough time in the day to properly focus on my high payoff activities!"

The brutal reality is that with so many functions that need to be completed on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, it can at times seem somewhat overwhelming.

### **In many small businesses the owner is also the:**

- Salesperson or Sales Manager
- Human Resource Manager - Recruitment Officer
- Payroll Officer
- Complaints Manager
- Warehouse Manager - Logistics Manager
- IT Manager
- Occupational Health & Safety Manager
- Supervisor
- Administration Manager
- Technician - Craftsman
- Productivity Manager
- The list goes on!
- Marketing Manager
- Financial Controller
- Customer Relationship Manager
- Tax Collector
- Purchasing Officer
- Quality Control Manager
- Web Master

(Important: this can apply equally to those who work as employees in small business, work for corporates, etc. - as most roles encompass a wide range of responsibilities that are overlooked when looking at productivity in the traditional manner)

When viewed this way it is not surprising to see how it is possible to be frantically busy each day - but not have the time to focus on what is really important.

So from a business and personal productivity perspective what can you do about it?

### **Step 1 - Define all the roles you need to fulfill**

First make a list of all the roles you fulfill within your business - be sure to include your roles outside work - husband, wife, partner, son, daughter etc., as applicable. This will give you an overview of your business and personal responsibilities.

Tease the roles out to identify the critical functions within each.

Then over a period of 2 weeks endeavour to estimate the amount of time you are actually spending fulfilling each role - what does that reveal? Are there tasks that are taking you an inordinate amount of time to complete?

### **Step 2 - Understand where you can truly add value**

Create a list of your personal strengths and weaknesses and consider:

- Strengths - are they being used to the greatest effect in the business - if not, what needs to change?
- Weaknesses - when looking at the roles in your business how are they impacting? What needs to change? Is training required? Should the task be delegated or outsourced?

Often when clients complete this exercise they realise a significant amount of time is being absorbed performing tasks for which they really do not have the appropriate skill set and crucially, that this is detracting from the time available to focus on the high payoff activities.

Common examples we see are; business owners endeavouring to be their own bookkeeper or Webmaster - both of which are areas where specialist knowledge is needed to be effective - they are also areas that can have a significant negative impact on the business if performed incorrectly.

### **Step 3 – Clarify what you really should be doing!**

Having completed this exercise thus far, the next step for those roles/tasks that are absorbing a significant amount of time is to decide:

- Is it a High Payoff Activity?
- If I need to perform it myself - what training is available?
- Can it be delegated (ensure you also delegate sufficient authority) or outsourced?
- If delegated or outsourced, how will I use this time to focus on my high payoff activities?
- What tasks am I currently performing could I simply stop doing?

It is important when looking at outsourcing - to not just focus on the cost - but also on the time-gain this will provide to focus on what is truly important - actually growing your business!

In relation to “stop doing” – there are many tasks in a business that we perform because it has always been so! Often these are tasks we enjoy doing – but which do little to advance the business towards its goals. In that case for all tasks it is always worth asking – “What would be the impact if I simply stopped doing this task? – In the writers personal experience the reality is – very little!

#### **Step 4 – Plan for Success**

The final step in the process is to then allocate time in your calendar to perform the functions that need to be completed for the business to be successful.

While the demands of business are such this may well change - if you do not plan to perform the critical functions in your business - you are setting yourself up for stress, sleepless nights and at the extreme - failure!

#### **Summary**

Often when we start the process of trying to improve our personal or business productivity we tend to focus only on the tasks we need to perform - without considering them in the context of broader role functions. This invariably means important elements are overlooked and as a result our productivity plan quickly falls apart.

Understanding all the role functions within your business is the first step towards putting a personal or business productivity plan in place that will actually work in the real world and free you up to focus on what is important!

**Bruce Hall**