How to Build a Business That Runs Without You

() Every business guru and all of these helpful books will tell you to work on your business instead of in your business. But not one of them will tell you what does that actually mean. So, based on seven years of experience working with around 2,000 small businesses, I'm going to give you the one exercise you actually need to make the shift from doer to operator. Let's start by defining what are the two realities we're trying to leap between. () When it comes to the doer mentality, you're working in the business and that means you're focusing on executing tasks. There is a plan. You just got to do the things. Check the box. You're a task focused person. You're also focused here on super detailed decision making. Things like which color should you choose here? Should it be left or right aligned? Should the order happen on Thursday or on Friday? Micro decisions are where your focus is. And at the bottom, your main priority is focusing on yourself. Odds are you spend most of your time thinking about yourself, your to do list, your plans. And if you're in this lane, you might not even know what the rest of the business is even doing. You've got blinders on, intentionally or not. And if you wanted to know what everybody else is working on, the only way you could even find it out is by asking them all one by one. But in this doer phase, you don't have time to do that. And you're not. Now let's contrast that with operating. When you're the operator of a team, rather than focusing on individual tasks, () you're focused on an overall system. In other words, how do all of the tasks piece together? Here we might be focused on fulfilling the order. Here we might be thinking about what are all the steps needed to fulfill an order, which takes the longest, which can I make faster, and which actually matter. We're thinking about a whole string of events and how they connect with our technology, our people and our processes, rather than just focusing on checking one box in one piece. In other words, doers are very zoomed in and system builders are quite zoomed out. Moving on to the next point, decision making is a point of difference. An operator is focused on big decisions. So we think about things like do we need to hire right now? What is a reasonable turnaround time? How can we make this system faster or more efficient? These kinds of decisions are where an operator is going to be spending their time when they're working on the business. We're not going to ask ourselves should it be left or right aligned. That is the job of doers. Now, speaking of doers, the other shift when it comes to operating like an operator is that your focus is outside yourself. Yes, you still have to manage yourself, manage your to do list, make sure that you're balancing your own priorities. But your obsession needs to be the enablement of other people. Your focus is always all around you. Instead of having blinders on, you have mirrors open so you can see ahead and behind. You know exactly what others are working on because you know that if you know what they're doing, you can help them get there faster. And that is ultimately your job is to enable everyone around you. But just like you wouldn't have a sports team without a coach, you don't want a bunch of doers with no operator, because the operator is the one that determines how difficult the game is to play. It's like they have an imaginary knob in the background. And so if you don't have an operator, your difficulty level will stay at max. It will be as hard as possible to do everything you need to do because the person who could potentially make that easier and help you coordinate does not exist. Now, what are some symptoms that you are in this pickle where you have difficulty cranked all the way up to 11 sign number one, your focus () is on hitting the next deadline. You are focused on the short term, and rather than trying to hit certain metrics or targets for performance, you tend to focus on meeting the next deliverable or deadline. Symptom number two is tradition, not best practice guides. How you do most of what you do. Why do you write social media posts the way you do? Because you've always done it that way. Why do you prepare orders in this order of events? Because you've always done it that way. Why is your website look like that? Because we've always done it that way. And this is not because you're trying to be stuck in the past. It's because you simply do not have time to think about why things are happening. Because again, as a doer, you're focused on what needs to be done and by when. This, why and how. You don't have time for that. And that brings us to the third symptom of having an empty operator seat, which is that isolation is the norm, instead of collaboration. You have a team of individuals. Each person might be amazing, super smart, super talented, they know what they need to do, but they're doing it their own way, in their own time, by themselves. They don't have the venue or need or suggestion even to start working together to swap notes to share their knowledge, to document SOPs, to establish shared conventions. No, no, no. Everyone does their own thing and as long as they get it done, you're fine with it. And because you yourself are working so far away from your team as a doer yourself, you might not even notice that people are working in this isolationist way. And this isolation isn't because people are mean spirited or not team players or any of that. It's just because there's no one bringing them together. Kind of like a middle school dance. You got people standing around the sidelines all on their own. What we need is someone to break the ice and that is the job of an operator. By the way, if you're not quite sure how far along the doer and operator spectrum you might fall, one great place to start would be our free audit we have here at ProcessDriven. After you answer a few questions about what's working or maybe not working on your team, you'll get a personalized report and that report will be a really good indicator as to whether or not you are in a position where this operator shift could make a big difference. So you can find that free quiz in the description below in case it might be helpful to you. But let's get back to it. I don't want this to become another abstract motivational pep talk about how you shouldn't work in your business, you should work on your business. Because odds are you've already heard that advice and yet you're still () working in your business. I believe the reason is because when it comes to working on the business, we're not really clear on what that looks like. What do we actually do if we're focused on this arena? Here's one tactic you just focus on for the next few weeks. It will transform this area of your business and start really making your doers lives easier. It's inside this category of system building for working on the business, but it's a little bit more specific than that. Instead of just thinking of systems as abstract areas of process and procedure and people and technology, which is so vague it's not very helpful, I want you to think specifically about what I'm going to call routines. So if there is nothing else you do for the next four weeks, if you will practice this one exercise one time for five minutes every day, I promise you it will absolutely change how your time is spent and start allowing your team to crank down the difficulty by actually having you step () into that operator role. Here's what it looks like. I call it routine-ifying. Now, I know routine is not a real word, but I assure you this is a real exercise that will give you real results. Routine-ifying is about defining what, when, who and how for all the things that happen inside your business. And here's the most important part, putting it inside one tab in your browser. This tab is something that you want to then share with everybody on your team. So if you already have a task management system, you've got a head start. But what you need to do is fill it with the routine activities that happen in your business. An example of routine-ifing would be, every April, I need to submit my taxes. Every Monday, I need to review payroll. Every Tuesday, I need to contact clients. Every Thursday, I check the buyer's report. Every second Tuesday of the month, I check all the links on the website so they're not broken. Every quarter, I add new URLs to our Etsy store. And so on and so on and so on. Your gut reaction to this routine-ifing of buying exercise is likely that it is just so simple. That's what I want you to feel, because system building should feel simple. When you go through this, though, you're making some not so simple improvements to the overall strength of your business. Because when you start capturing what, when, who and how in a shared format, other people on your team can start seeing what other people are doing. All of a sudden, we're making it built into our work environment to go from individual focus to collective focus. We are also making it extremely easy for the who column to change. For example, if I start to write down and notice that every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, I go into the support ticketing system and make sure that none of the tickets were unresolved from the previous day. If I notice that, I can start challenging, hmm, am I the right who to do that task? No. Well, it does need to be done. Can I change out that who column? We're also allowing ourselves to question the how. Because if we start sharing, oh, here's how I'm getting this report of unclosed tickets, of unresolved tickets. Somebody else might see that or take on that task when we reassign it and say, hmm, well, how you're doing that is not how I would do it. Here's a much faster way using AI. Whoa. All of a sudden we're not just improving who, we're improving how. Not to mention the possibility that we can question the frequency of actions or even the merits of actions altogether. All of this kind of reflection and thought and on the fly improvements, this continuous improvement process, all starts with just one simple practice of routine-ifying, which again is just writing down what, when, who and how in one shared tab where your whole team can see it. Now, I should point out, when we go through this shift of making you not () the bottleneck, there are going to be some teams where you experience a little bit of resistance. Kind of like my bulldog Ollie. You give him a toy, then you try to take it away, taking away autonomy and independence, even if it's for making the overall life of a doer easier. Some people might just inherently resist that kind of change. If you'd like to see a follow up video where I give you some strategies on how to handle this kind of resistance, like my dog Ollie, you can go ahead and write Ollie in the comments below. That comment will act as a vote to let me know you'd like to see that video. We've had over 2,000 small companies implement this practice and the results will shock you. But really, the real test is to implement this for yourself so you can see it in your team. Now, I'm hoping all of this sounds pretty straightforward. It is pretty straightforward and simple. That's why it's such a great place to start. But I do want to call out some of the common pitfalls that might come up when you start going down this route. () Pitfall number one is hoarding. So I am telling you about this idea of routine-ifying, right? So you have this knowledge. Now, if you do not share this video, if you do not share this knowledge, what's going to happen is you're going to become the bottleneck. You're going to be the person creating all of their teens. You'll be filling them in, you'll be explaining it to everybody. You will become the doer of the project about making you less of a doer, which is not the direction we want this to go. So be sure that you share this video with your team members so they hear directly from the source all of the context and knowledge that you currently have that will put you all at equal footing. Then make it a team effort to document what, when, how and who, rather than putting it all on your shoulders. This is good practice for what's going to be happening in the future as well, because you certainly don't want to create this whole list only for you to use it and for all of the tasks to be assigned to you. If we do that, we're really just acting like a doer again, focused just on our own lane. Okay? Now that brings us to mistake number two, which is () when we start decentralizing control, we see a dip in quality. Specifically here I'm talking about the quality of routines. When creating routine tasks they are most valuable if we create tasks in a standardized way. That means three requirements must be here. When we are naming our routines, we want to make sure all of our task names start with a verb and are a measurable outcome, not a goal or a theme. A simple example of this is rather than having the routine every Monday of work on YouTube videos, I want to have a routine every Monday of film one YouTube video. So I'm going from a focus that really no one can measure to a measurable outcome that other people can understand. This is the difference between work on support tickets and clear out all open support tickets. The second quality control when it comes to creating routines is size. We want to make sure all of our routines are something that can be done in one sitting. So for a busy parent who is juggling kids and other things at the same time, a work sitting might be 20 minutes. For someone who does more deep work and really does better with long chunks of uninterrupted focus, that might be 90 minutes. But whatever the chunk of time is that you're able to commit at once, that is the size of the routine we should have. If you find yourself creating routines that take more than your average work sitting of 20 to 90 minutes, break it up into smaller parts. So rather than produce one YouTube video, you might have a routine for scripting, a routine for filming, a routine for recording all broken apart. We're breaking it into bite sized pieces that fit one work period. The benefits of making your routines the size of a work session might not feel obvious right now, but when you start delegating these or documenting the methods to do them, trust me, this is going to make a huge difference. The third requirement for our routines is making sure that they are () actual things that we want to do. Now this might sound really obvious, but there is a very natural inclination to to start filling routines lists with nice to haves with ideas with things that you think would be nice. Please, hold off on this. Our focus on establishing this routine-ifing approach is to capture what is actually happening, what actually drives the business, what you actually want to do. If you are thinking about something that is not a routine, if you would like to do something that is not a routine. Routines are actions that you have already committed to do, usually on a recurring basis. But wait a second, once you create these tasks, how do people know the how of doing the tasks? Well, you could either create a giant policy binder like this. Or you could watch the video on the end screen where I show you my method for capturing the how. That takes 15 minutes or less. See you in the next one and Enjoy the Process!